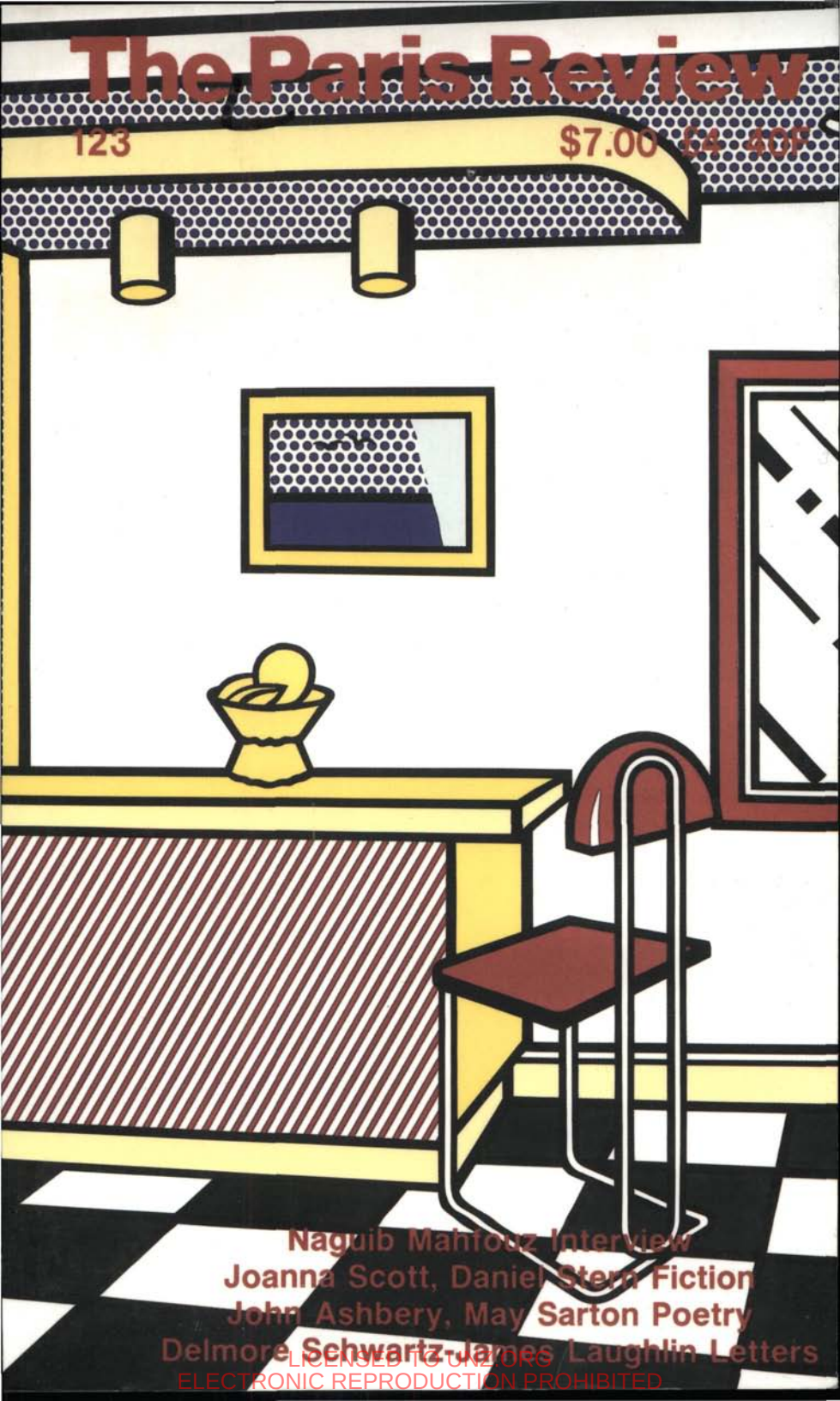
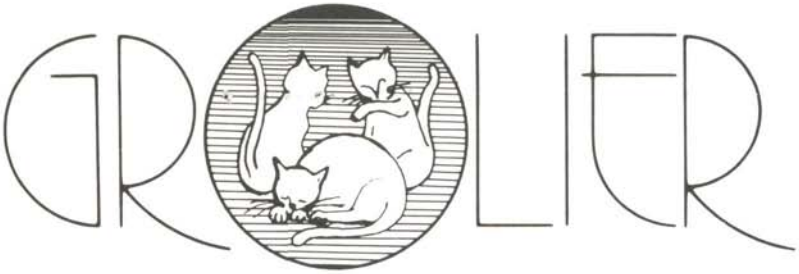
The Paris Review

123 $7.00 £4 40F



Naguib Mahfouz Interview
Joanna Scott, Daniel Stern Fiction
John Ashbery, May Sarton Poetry
Delmore Schwartz, James Laughlin Letters

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Poetry Book Shop, Inc.

Established in 1927

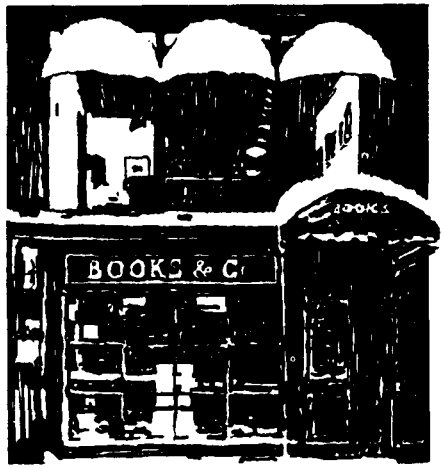
Trade
•
Small Press
•
Periodicals
•
Audiocassettes

Mail & Special Orders Invited

6 Plympton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 547-4648
or
(800) 234-POEM
FAX: 547-4230

MC, Visa, Amex accepted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"The one way of tolerating existence is to lose oneself in literature as in a perpetual orgy."

—Gustave Flaubert,
in a letter, 1858

B·O·O·K·S
& Co.

939 Madison Avenue
New York City 10021

'phone (212) 737·1450

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FARRAR
STRAUS
GIROUX

POETRY

FRANK BIDART
In the Western Night
Collected Poems 1965-90
Paperback/June
0-374-52271-5

TONY HARRISON
V. and Other Poems
Paperback/May
0-374-52273-1

RANDALL JARRELL
Selected Poems
Edited by William H. Pritchard
Paperback/April 0-374-52290-1

DAVID KALSTONE
Becoming a Poet
Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell
Paperback/May 0-374-52276-6

PAUL MULDOON
Madoc
A Mystery
Hardcover/April 0-374-19557-9

LES MURRAY
The Rabbiter's Bounty
Collected Poems
Hardcover/June 0-374-12622-4

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD
Randall Jarrell
A Literary Life
Paperback/April 0-374-52277-4

CHASE TWICHELL
Perdido
Hardcover/June 0-374-23073-0

FARRAR • STRAUS • GIROUX
Now at your bookstore, or call 1-800-631-8571.
To receive a complete catalog of poetry books in print, please write:
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 19 Union Square West,
New York, New York 10003,
or call 212-206-5311

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review

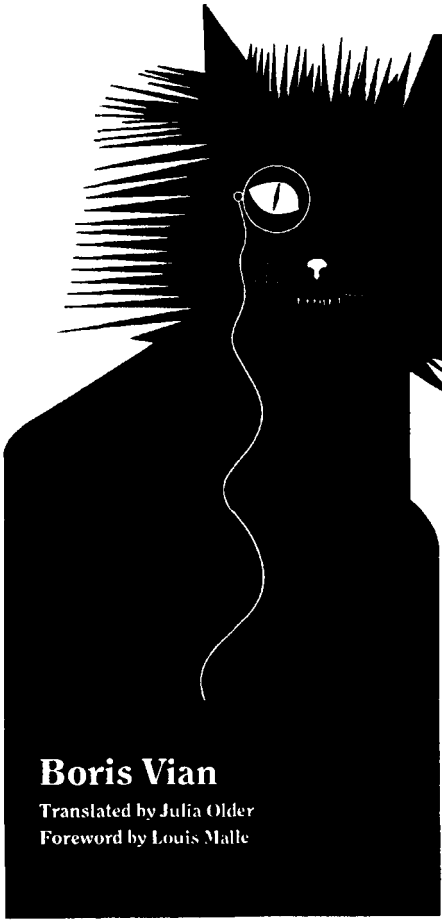
Publisher	Deborah S. Pease
Editors	George A. Plimpton, Peter Matthiessen, Donald Hall, Robert B. Silvers, Blair Fuller, Maxine Groffsky
Managing Editor	James Linville
Editor-at-Large	Jeanne McCulloch
Senior Editor	Elizabeth Gaffney
Associate Editor	Rowan Gaither
Assistant Editors	Charles Rogers, Andrea Chapin, Daniel Kunitz
Poetry Editor	Patricia Storace
Art Editor	Richard Marshall
Paris Editor	Harry Mathews
London Editor	Shusha Guppy
Business Manager	Lillian von Nickern
Print Director	Joan Krawczyk
Special Consultants	Robert Phillips, Ben Sonnenberg
Contributing Editors	William Plummer, Patsy Southgate, Lucas Matthiessen, Joanie McDonnell, Charles Russell, David Michaelis, Helen Bartlett, Robert Becker, Joanna Laufer, John Glusman, Gerald Howard, Tom Jenks, Mary Maguire, Michael Sagalyn, Morgan Entrekin, Ileene Smith, Dan Max, Elise Paschen, William Wadsworth, Barbara Jones, Allen Peacock, Molly McQuade, Adam Begley, Christopher Merrill, Haruki Murakami, Jamey Gambrell, Sara Barrett, Magda Bogin, Fran Kiernan
Editorial Assistants	Rose Styron, Jill Fox, Mary B. Lumet, Kevin Richardson, Matthew Rose, Michele Somerville, Ian Ganassi, Kip Azzoni, Susannah Hunnewell, Dini von Mueffling, Joanna Hernandez, Claudia Grazioso, Barry Munger, Kendra Taylor, Paul Nastu, David Gimbel, Julia Myer Ward, Timothy Sultan, Walker Gaffney, David Madole, Alexander Shakar, Anja Erdmann, Ellen Geist, David Patrick, Phyllida Burlingame, Emily Mott, Wendy Kagan, Joachim Till, Larissa MacFarquhar, Colin Dickerman, Logan Ward, Gia Kourlas, Elissa Schappell, Stephen Gaghan, Amanda Copeland, Alicia Muñoz, Joshua Pashman, David Branyan, Declan Spring, Joe Coplin, Elizabeth Ziemska, Brad Engelstein, Patricia Cockram, Stacie Evans, Amy Prince
Advisory Editors	Nelson Aldrich, Patrick Bowles, Joan Dillon, William Pène du Bois, Drue Heinz, John Train, Harold L. Humes, Ben Johnson, Jonathan Miller, John Phillips, Thomas H. Guinzburg, Lawrence M. Bensky, Frederick Seidel, Terry Southern, Max Steele, Philip Roth, William Styron, Eugene Walter, Christopher Cerf, Tom Clark, Ron Padgett, Maggie Paley, Fayette Hickox, Molly McKaughan, Francine du Plessix Gray, Lindy Guinness, Hallie Gay Walden, David Robbins, David Evanier, Mona Simpson, Jonathan Galassi, Jonathan Dee, Antonio Weiss, Beth Drenning, Christopher Lightfoot Walker, Timothy Dickinson
Founding Publisher	Sadruddin Aga Khan
Former Publishers	Bernard F. Conners, Ron Dante

The Paris Review is published quarterly by The Paris Review, Inc. Vol. 34, No. 123, Summer, 1992. Office: 45–39 171 Place, Flushing, New York 11358 (ISSN #0031-2037). Paris Office: Harry Mathews, 67 rue de Grenelle, Paris 75007 France. London Office: Shusha Guppy, 8 Shawfield St., London, SW3. Distributors in the U.S.A.: Eastern News Company, Sandusky, OH. Typeset and printed in USA by Haddon Craftsmen, Bloomsburg, Pa. Price for single issue in USA: $7.00; in France: 40F; in the UK: £4. Post-paid subscription for four issues $24, for eight issues $48, lifetime Associate $1000. Postal surcharge of $7.00 per four issues outside USA (excluding life subscriptions). Subscription card is bound within magazine. Please give six weeks notice of change of address using subscription card. "The Land of Mashriq" from *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma,* © 1983 by Naguib Mafouz. English Translation, © 1992 by American University in Cairo. Forthcoming from Doubleday.

While The Paris Review welcomes the submission of unsolicited manuscripts, it cannot accept responsibility for their loss or delay, or engage in related correspondence. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope. Fiction manuscripts should be submitted to George Plimpton, poetry to Richard Howard c/o Box S, The Paris Review, 541 East 72nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

Charter member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses. This publication is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.
Second Class postage paid at Flushing, New York, and at additional mailing offices.
Postmaster: Please send address changes to 45-39 171st Place, Flushing, N.Y. 11358.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

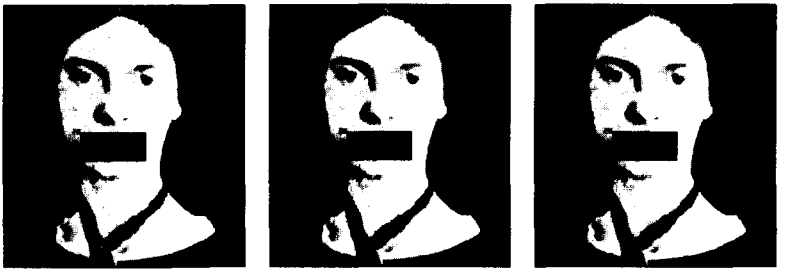


Blues for a Black Cat and Other Stories

"The Pataphysical Imperative – which brought Alfred Jarry, Tristan Tzara and Eugen Ionesco into being – has in Boris Vian the perfect mid-century ambassador. Vian is right there, at the intersection of the French Surrealist century with the American Jazz century, blowing the riffs of the Great Comic-Tragic Pata-Spirit. The book is a Portal to the Potential World where all of us live now." – **Andrei Codrescu**. This collection of Vian's short fiction is available for the first time in English. French Modernist Library series.
$19.95

At bookstores or the **University of Nebraska Press**
901 N 17 · Lincoln 68588-0520 · (800) 755-1105 publishers since 1941

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IF YOU CARE ABOUT

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT

CENSORSHIP IN THE ARTS

IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the **ARTS**

THEN YOU SHOULD JOIN

THE LITERARY NETWORK.

The Literary Network is a new project, jointly administered by Poets & Writers and The Council of Literary Magazines & Presses (CLMP). LITNET will coordinate public education and advocacy efforts around issues pertaining to freedom of expression. If you're a writer, editor, librarian or bookseller (or someone else who cares about these issues), you need LITNET (and LITNET needs you). To be added to our mailing list and receive our free newsletter, please write:

THE LITERARY NETWORK

COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES & PRESSES

154 CHRISTOPHER STREET #3C

NEW YORK NEW YORK 10014

The Literary Network is supported by grants from the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHY DOES EVERYONE

LOVE TO HATE GORE VIDAL ?

Never before in recent history has any writer been so scorned, shunned, overlooked—and infrequently praised—as Gore Vidal.

Here, celebrated critic Jay Parini takes on the enigma of this vastly misunderstood writer. Italo Calvino, William H. Pritchard, Samuel Pickering, Catharine R. Stimpson, James Tatum, Harold Bloom, and Louis Auchincloss are just a few of the twenty essayists Parini has gathered to examine, celebrate, chide, and recall the scope of the Vidal oeuvre. Combined with a revealing recent interview with Vidal himself, they try to answer the question: *Why does everyone love to hate Gore Vidal?*

GORE VIDAL

WRITER AGAINST THE GRAIN

edited by Jay Parini

389 pp. • $29.95 • At Better Bookstores

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

DEPT. T59 • 136 SOUTH BROADWAY • IRVINGTON, NY 10533
TO ORDER, CALL OR WRITE. CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED. TEL: (800) 944-UNIV • FAX: (800) 944-1844

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELAINE

LOVES

THE PARIS REVIEW

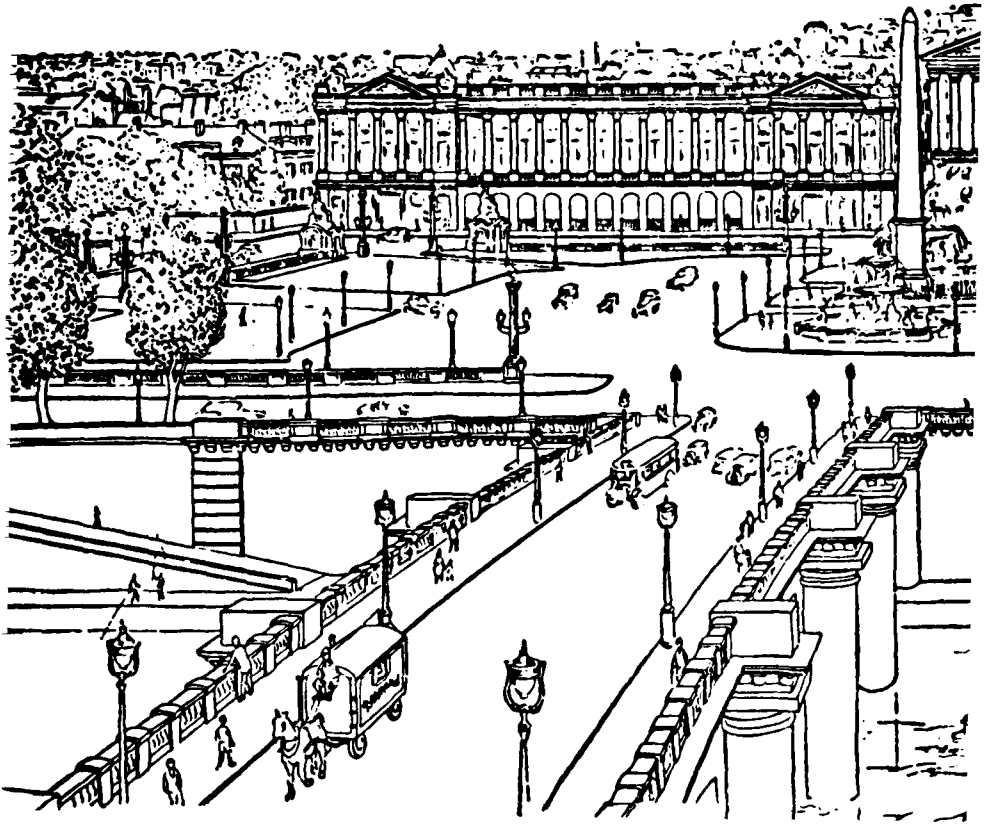
ELAINE'S

1703 SECOND AVE
NEW YORK CITY

reservations: 534-8103/8114

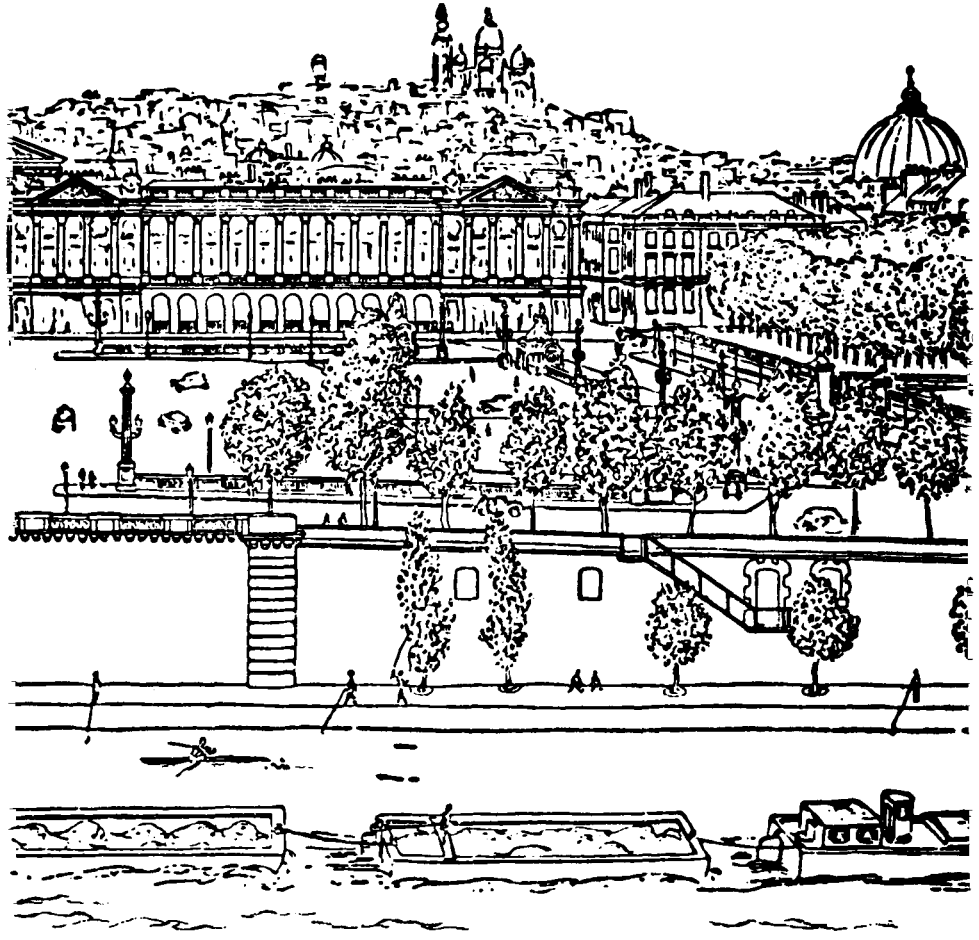
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review



45-39 171 Place
Flushing, New York 11358

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Eastern News Distributors, Inc.
1130 Cleveland Road
Sandusky, Ohio 44870

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frontispiece by William Pène du Bois.
Cover by Roy Lichtenstein, *Interior with Built-in Bar,* 1991, oil and magna on canvas. © Roy Lichtenstein.
Table of contents illustration by David Wojnarowicz, *House* (from *Sex Series*), 1990, black and white photograph.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Number 123

	Interview	
Naguib Mahfouz	*The Art of Fiction CXXIX*	51
	Feature	
Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin	*Selected Letters*	137
	Fiction	
Henry Green	*Arcady: or A Night Out*	99
Naguib Mahfouz	*The Land of Mashriq*	43
Joanna Scott	*A Borderline Case*	12
Daniel Stern	*A Hunger Artist by Franz Kafka: a story*	214
	Art	
Jack Pierson	*You Went to Hollywood*	101
	Poetry	
John Ashbery	*Two Poems*	74
Uli Becker	*The God-like Flash*	41
Dante Alighieri	*Inferno: Canto XXVIII*	110
Joy Dworkin	*Gannet*	84
Michael Fried	*The Wild Irises*	98
Ian Ganassi	*Civilization and its Discontents*	94
Donald Hall	*The Museum of Clear Ideas or say: Horsecollar's Odes*	189
Mark Halliday	*Years Ago*	39
Brooks Haxton	*Horologe*	93
Maja Herman	*Under the Glass Bell*	34
James Laughlin	*The Moths*	35
Greg Miller	*From the Museum*	125
Ottó Orbán	*The Journey of Barbarus*	134
Linda Pastan	*Ideal City*	133
Oskar Pastior	*sestina with interview*	37
Donald Revell	*In Company*	86
Nicholas Samaras	*Two Poems*	78
May Sarton	*Three Poems*	31
Tom Sexton	*Homecoming*	135
Enid Shomer	*Wanting His Child*	126
Charlie Smith	*The Plum-Shaped Heart*	96
Arthur Sze	*Archipelago*	116
John Tranter	*Dark Harvest*	127
	Notes on Contributors	243

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Borderline Case

Joanna Scott

The Analytic Situation

This is the story of K and B, analyst and patient; specifically, this is the story of their first session together, before K had cured his patient, "dispersed" B, as he'd say, helping him to become "more B than ever before." K loved B, and if K hadn't had such a highly developed *le-moi-peau* he might have become irrevocably attached to B "by cock, in mouth and arse" (B's description of his own furtive activities). But K attached himself to his pen instead, and for thirty years, on and off, through three periods of analysis, he listened to and recorded B's anxious, obsessional narratives. Instead of admitting that he loved him, he used B, turned his life into a notable if not groundbreaking case history. K took credit for B's achievements and ultimately for his happiness. B died a contented man, thanks to K, or so K would have it. And K died without ever once making love to B, neither buggering nor buggered by—a professional to the mar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

row. A prince. A lay analyst who believed himself a genius.

They met in 1953, when B was far less than he could have been, less B than B. He had a high-ranking post at an embassy in London at the time and had become increasingly adept at seducing young boys. Not boys who wanted him for himself but boys who wanted B's quid, boys on their way to a better life. "Escapades," as K referred to B's encounters with admitted distaste, discouraging B from supplying any graphic details, K stifling his own "clinical curiosity" because he feared that curiosity would make him B's accomplice, "an agent to his sexual prowling and practices." Though B was a "very narcissistic borderline psychopath," he was also a survivor, and if nibbling on the foreskins of nameless youths gave him a sense of purpose, K wouldn't interfere. Just as long as B didn't talk about it. K didn't want to know. "There will be time enough to hear all that," he told B at their first meeting, and for the next thirty years he diverted B whenever he began to talk about "all that," until there was no time left—B died of heart failure in 1981, and K realized too late that his favorite patient had remained a mystery to him, on paper a sharply defined borderline case but in K's memory only the shadow of a man.

1953. K is twenty-four years old, at the start of a promising career; B is thirty-nine. K allows himself a quarter of an hour between patients so he can review his notes, pour a glass of fine Scotch whiskey, fill and light his pipe. The houseboy is responsible for meeting each patient at the front door and taking him up in the lift; the secretary escorts the patient into K's office as soon as the sideboard clock has chimed the hour. Ordinarily, a patient finds K waiting by the window, his back to the door. Not until the secretary has left does he turn to face his visitor, revolving slowly, his leather riding boots creaking, soles scratching against the wood, the sounds magnified by the vaulted ceiling. But on the day B arrives for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his first consultation K is still in his chair, the letter from the referring analyst lying open on his desk.

"A homosexual who complains of a theoretical dislike of homosexuality. Prognosis: poor." So why bother? K wonders wearily, his mind so bored by the conjecture that he doesn't hear the knock. Why bother about anything? Why work, why talk, why write, why eat? In moments like these K indulges himself with the patronizing boredom that only the rich can afford, a boredom that, when flaunted, gives a bored man immeasurable control over those who bore him. K, a Punjabi Muslim, has more than enough wealth to keep himself entertained, but he values boredom, understands intuitively that boredom is as necessary as hunger, and he relishes the power gained with a well-timed yawn. He doesn't need to work and didn't choose this profession in order "to secure himself a place in the human community," every man's ambition, according to Freud. He works out of indifference—rather, works in order to channel his indifference, presides over his patients as he once presided at his father's side over Punjabi peasants.

On this sultry August day in 1953, however, K is caught off guard. From the beginning B's case annoys him: a homophobic homosexual with doubtful therapeutic potential. K hasn't even had time to pour himself a drink. He looks up as the secretary knocks again, and a drop of perspiration slides into his eye.

B's first sight of the famous prince is of a thin young man behind a sprawling mahogany desk rubbing his fist against his eye. And from his side of the room K sees a blur, a watery ghost—uncharacteristically, he wants to see more. He rises abruptly from his chair and bumps his knees against the desk drawer, recognizes then, as the sharp pain travels along the nerve up his thigh, that this man B is extremely dangerous. B, despite the verdict from the referring analyst, already has the upper hand.

Not often in K's experience will a patient prove as witty as B, as daring, as "in the world," as B will say of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself, subtly proud of the intensity of his emotions, though long ago he developed a sardonic public manner, effective self-protection for a pederast who has worked both as a diplomat and as a coal miner. K, in contrast, swings back and forth between indifference and satisfaction, each day of his week organized carefully so that he can look forward to his pleasures without concern. B has never been able to plan ahead, much less to arrange his life so that he knows what to expect. His days are full of mishaps and coincidences, with few vacant moments for reflection. In a later session with K, B will compare himself to a small child abandoned in Piccadilly Circus, a child bumped and jostled, shoved, petted, squeezed, pinched, and pushed aside, a little boy without a sense of direction but determined to hold his own. B has taught himself to hold his own. K hasn't had the experiences that would make him B's equal. But K does have one advantage over B, an unqualified advantage: B may live more intensely than K, but K is more beautiful than B.

A polished diamond looks its value—the purer the stone, the more intricately it absorbs and refracts light, its crystalline surface suggesting to the human mind a fourth dimension, even the illusion of magic, as though, if we could see into the diamond, we would see the future. Young Prince K has a similar beauty: Like a diamond he looks his value; like a mounted, expertly cut diamond he is inevitably the focus of any social gathering, startling enough to take your breath away. Even if you don't love K you will love to gaze at him. By 1953 K has reaped much from his beauty, ascended quickly into the top ranks of his profession, a mere dilettante with a parasitical intelligence but a feast for the eyes. Perhaps his wealth has made prominence easier, but his beauty has made prominence possible. No photograph can evoke the immediate lure of the man in person. K's unique beauty rests mostly in the complicated dance of light upon his skin. When they know each other better, B will describe K's skin as "a lake of eucalyptus honey."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On their first meeting, as K moves from behind his desk, the heels of his riding boots clicking, his britches rubbing softly between his thighs, B gives in to the same passion that spectators lavish on movie stars. B falls in love with K at first sight, though he knows even then that he'll never possess him. K's beauty cannot be captured either by a stranger or by a loner—he is an illusion, a projection on a screen, all surface, a voluptuous imitation.

Still, as he extends his hand, B imagines drawing his tongue along the curve where K's neck joins the shoulder, sliding down the side of his smooth skin, feeling the heat of his testicles, inhaling the residual smells of urine, semen, sweat, soap.

K the healer. Eucalyptus K. He can read B. He knows what the man is thinking, the laconic pansy, a puff out for a joy ride. Dangerous? Not as dangerous as K himself. K will make B panic, will throw him off balance, will unnerve him, since B has already tried to do the same to K. K has a theory about people like B: "Instead of transference-readiness they tend to provoke or seduce the analyst into a tantalizing relation to their material," K will write, and though years later he will regret not involving himself "transference-wise" or "interpersonally" with B, from the beginning of the treatment he is determined to defend himself against seduction, not because of professional etiquette but because he considers himself too valuable for the likes of B, too valuable for anyone—with the exception of a prima ballerina, his fiancée—in ugly London town.

The men shake hands firmly, efficiently, and K motions toward a small oak table. He talks with new patients here before he moves them to the couch, first intimidates them with a face-to-face interrogation before he lets them spin on their own. But B proves too nimble for K—he walks past the table, sits at the end of the couch, crosses his legs at the ankles, and says, "Of course, you want to know about my childhood."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Without a word K takes a seat in the rattan chair by the raised end of the couch, the least comfortable chair in the room, his "working-chair," as he calls it, preferring it precisely because this chair is so uncomfortable. An analyst owes it to his patient to stay awake and alert, an effort not as easy as it might seem, since the ambiance of the analytic situation is so conducive to sleep: voices droning on and on, words blending like musical notes until the analyst hears only the enervating melody, his eyes close, his head starts to nod, he sags and eventually topples from his chair. Such a fall would make K the laughing-stock of the British Psychoanalytic Society, despite his good looks. Note-taking helps K to fend off sleep, and the chair keeps him from relaxing. No patient has ever found cause to fault him for inattention; he always appears assiduous if not entirely captivated, always looks as though he has an opinion about the matter at hand. Suave K, sophisticated K, will never be the object of laughter. He carries himself with an elegance that equals his fiancée's, a dancer with the Royal Ballet. Just like his future wife, K is virtually incapable of awkwardness.

B, obviously to K, would prefer to spend his time lying on beds, on chaise lounges and analysts' couches, torpid and engorged, like a boa that has just swallowed a small rat. He is an American. K despises Americans, a classless, cultureless people, their civilization representing the nadir of history. Yet he finds himself drawn to them, fascinated by these reptiles that don't chew their food. Perhaps it is a coincidence that in a later session B will recount a dream in which he shed his skin "just like a snake." Or perhaps K himself in some forgotten aside makes the comparison first.

With a manicured thumb K pushes the cap off his pen and records B's leading statement. Of course K wants to hear about B's childhood. Of course. "Affectless," K scribbles in the margin of the notepad as B lifts his feet onto the couch and reclines. K writes furiously, trying to keep up with B, while B describes three important ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

periences from his childhood. B is K's last patient of the day, so K doesn't bother to draw the therapeutic session to its normal close. Except for one terse comment to steer B away from the subject of perversity ("There will be time enough . . ."), he lets this arrogant Yankee talk until the supply of analytically pertinent (from B's perspective) and charmingly outrageous childhood memories has been depleted.

Finally, B licks his lips, parched from over an hour's worth of monologue, and falls silent. K exploits the silence, extends it, keeps B waiting for a response. A breeze ripples the edge of the window drape, the silky maroon color appearing almost fluorescent in the light. The flat spans the entire fifth floor, and by late afternoon the front room smells of exhaust from idling traffic on the busy street below. But this main room of the flat, the treatment room, faces the back, and the rich scent of the summer's second bloom of roses fills the air: Amber Queen roses, Pacemaker and Harriny roses—K can name them all because he himself ordered them. K leaves nothing to chance, designs his world as if it were a stage set. Horses, Scotch, and Muslim piety: These are the main elements, and everything else is filigree.

He breathes softly, and B begins to shift on the couch, bending his legs, holding up one arm and letting the wrist go slack, clenching his fingers, opening them, grinding his palms together. Then all at once he looks up with an expression less smug than before, eyes narrowed, corners of his lips turned down in a kind of pout, as though he is about to beg K to do something, to say something, above all to cure him. For the last hour and a half B has been trying to seduce K with his unconvincing attempt at free association, secretly inviting the young prince to test his patient's virility; K, however, will make it perfectly clear that B shall never earn a place on his list of pleasures. He keeps B waiting, pretends to be deep in thought while privately he gloats, enjoying his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

privileges as jury and judge. Only when B exhales loudly and swings his feet to the floor does K finally say: "What else have you rehearsed for me?"

It should end here. But right then B looks with such pathetic surprise, the look of a man who has been hurt time and time again but still doesn't believe in cruelty, that K can't help it—he reaches out and touches his patient on the shoulder to console him. Immediately he regrets it. With his hand resting on B, the muscles taut beneath his fingers, K is as helpless as B was a moment ago, unable to pull away, unable to convince himself that such contact has no lasting significance. *What else have you rehearsed?* The impact of his ill-timed comment has been lost; he is stuck to B's surface, on the verge of complete annihilation. In the few seconds before he is swallowed whole, K begins to discover the true meaning of panic for himself.

B Takes in His Surroundings

Among the many images in K's office B notices: a 4 by 6 inch etching of the Bridge of Sighs, a Cubist painting of a cityscape, a Giacometti-style female figurine on a side table, a diploma from the University of Lahore, a certificate from the British Psychoanalytic Society, a shelf with six ribbed tumblers and a decanter, a coke fireplace, a white polo cap on the hook attached to the door, a marble polo-ball paperweight on the desk, a felt blotter, an ornamental ink stand and fountain pen, three photographs—one of K as a teenager standing between a white man (his tutor, B assumes) and his horse, one of K with his father, one of K alone in front of what B recognizes as the main bazaar in Lahore (B has been to Lahore twice on diplomatic missions)—a stack of empty file folders, a desk chair on wheels, a small Persian rug, a sea chest, four oak dining chairs upholstered in red leather, an oak

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sideboard, a telephone, a bronze nude Galatea with arms outstretched and a clockface in her belly, a small table beside the couch, a box of tissues on the table.

In Which B Boldly Imagines a Conversation between K and his Tutor

"Are there not Western nations, I might ask—excuse me for a moment, sir, I must give my Anarkali a sugar cube. Every afternoon I bring her a sugar cube. One day I forgot, you know, and I hadn't been astride her for two minutes before she threw me. Would you like to ride her? She's particular, my Anarkali, you have to win her approval. Here, you feed her the sugar. You're not a horseman, I can tell. Hold your hand flat, like this. You see, I'm supposed to learn from you, but maybe you shall learn something from me, too. They say I'm precocious. Do you want to hear the truth, sir? My father prefers me to my brothers and sisters. This is why I'll be your only pupil. And this is why Anarkali belongs to me now. She used to belong to our neighbor, an Englishman like you, but much richer—he owns the fields that you saw to the left of the road as we came from the station. We own the fields to the right. I wanted to ride Anarkali, but Mr. Brooks wouldn't let me near her—he thought her too high-strung and was worried that I would be injured. So my father bought her from him. Perhaps it disturbs you that my father has more than one wife? Perhaps you would prefer to travel in a taxi instead of in our tonga?

"Now, as I was saying, are there not Western nations more backwards than ours? Are there not Western nations, your own, for instance, where one religion is the state religion? And was not your Anglican faith founded by a monarch who himself had many wives? My father says that Christians and Muslims are cousins, much closer in kind to each other than either is to the Jews. The Jews don't revere Jesus, but we do. My father says as well that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your country today is full of gentlemen farmers and gouty politicians who don't know—how did he put it? What a spade is called?

"When to call a spade a spade, that's right, thank you, sir. Your country doesn't understand humility. And yet you are needy people, my father says, and needy people are doomed. Look at the beetle there on my shadow. Simple creature. It doesn't know that it should be afraid. It thinks its shiny carapace will protect it. Your country is like this beetle, sir, a beetle on Allah's shadow. You fancy yourself invulnerable. Not you, I don't mean you. Your people. There is a difference, surely. Just as there's a difference between my brothers and me. My oldest brother, Jamsheed, you know how he would spend his time if he could decide for himself? Making pots and sharing a *huqqa* with other potters. He wanted to ride Anarkali, so I gave him the reins and stood aside and watched. Jamsheed mounted and dug in his heels, but she wouldn't move for him, so he beat her with a stick, and still Anarkali stood there as proud as the most beautiful mare in the Punjab has a right to be, and Jamsheed, he looked like a madman atop a statue. I had a good laugh that day, let me tell you. And I swear my Anarkali laughed too, after Jamsheed had dismounted and skulked away. She flattened her ears, she flicked her tail, and she started to whinny, like this—believe it or not, sir, she was laughing. What do you think of my Anarkali, by the way? You haven't told me. Do you want to ride her? You're not afraid, are you? Have you served your time in the military?

"I ask too many questions, yes, I know, it annoys my mother. Do you have a girl back in England? Maybe you will like my sisters. They're not as particular as Anarkali. It is a funny name for a horse, isn't it? Anarkali. I named her after the concubine of Akbar, who was buried alive because she smiled at a prince. I will take you to see her tomb, if you'd like. And then you will take me to London. Don't tell my mother. She believes what the mul-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lahs say—that all vices come from the West. Not my father—he thinks you people are too stupid to be corrupt. So why are you here, you must be wondering? Why has my father brought an Englishman into his home to teach his son if he has no regard for your institutions? But it's not the institutions he holds in contempt, not your laws or libraries or hospitals or banks. He understands the importance of these in the same way that he understands the importance of a moneylender's gold. You are here to give us your gold, sir. You know, we put cream on our currant buns, we speak your language, we read your books. Yet we haven't grown careless. Look what happens when I flip this beetle onto its back. This is what is happening to you. To your people, I mean. My father says that the West is committing suicide with its own dagger. My mother says that Allah's foot is descending and England will be ground to dust. Like this.

"I hope I see London before there's no London left. Tell me about the taverns, sir, tell me what I should order for my supper. *Cold beef and a pint or two of ale, please.* Is this what I should say? Do I sound like an Englishman? Do you carry a snuffbox? Tell me the truth—do they really tie little girls onto the backs of circus ponies? Does the Lord Mayor eat curried cat's meat for breakfast? Have you ever seen a drowned man floating in the Thames? I don't want to go to London if I can't bring my Anarkali with me. I'll wear a surtout and Bucher boots and I'll ride Anarkali along the Serpentine Lake—you see, I know more than I pretend to know. I'll have an audience with the Queen, I expect. Will you teach me to play cricket?

"To be frank, sir, I don't entirely share my father's contempt. He has raised me to be one of you, and already I am a stranger to my own family. England is my proper home, though I've never been there. Someday I shall live in London, if the city survives the war. My father wants me to go. He wants me to go and after three years he expects me to return home. But when I go I shall never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come back, I know in my heart that I shall never come back. I am as much a foreigner here as you are, and London is my only true home. Please don't tell my father this—if he heard of my intentions he would take Anarkali away from me.

"You may smile, but without her I would have no reason to live. I know I speak passionately, but that's how it is. Take Anarkali from me, and I will wither and die, just as our fields would if you shut off the headworks of the canals. So now you know why I fear my father. He demands much from all his children, though it's obvious that he prefers me to the others. Still, I have to prove myself worthy. He wants me to study economics, but I would rather be a poet. Maybe you would read my poems and tell me what you think? I compose my poems in my head when I am riding, and I write them down at night, after everyone has gone to sleep. I'm not interested in the science of money. A man who enjoys delicate food doesn't need to train to be a chef, so why should a wealthy man be his own accountant? My father says that after he is gone the bankers will try to take advantage of me. But I am too clever for them. Do you think I am clever?

"My governess—she was Irish, the daughter of a widower who worked as a groom, or who was supposed to work. Mostly he drank beer while his daughter took care of the horses. She taught me to ride. She said I was too handsome to be clever, that boys as beautiful as me are always dull. I don't think she meant it. She was fond of me and liked especially to comb my hair. Violet. That was her name. She taught me everything I know about horses. After she left us she went to live in Amsterdam, and for seven years she sent me packages of black licorice on my birthday. Last year no package arrived, not even a card. I wonder what has become of her. Someday when I'm a famous poet she'll find me in London, and she'll admit that she'd been wrong about handsome boys. She had so many freckles—she let me count them once, sev-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enty-five altogether. She said that's how old she'll live to be: seventy-five. No one could handle horses better than Violet. She broke my arm—did I tell you that? So my father sent her away. Really, he dismissed her because I had grown too old to have a governess, and he didn't think her a proper influence for my younger sisters. She hadn't intended to break my arm. It was a game we used to play. She'd hold me by a wrist and ankle and turn as fast as she could while I flew around her above the ground. One day she lost her grip and dropped me. The bone came through the skin here, you can see the scar. She didn't mean to hurt me. I wonder if she has a husband. The morning she left us I asked her to marry me. Hah, now I consider myself lucky! What if she'd accepted? I would have been obliged to honor my proposal. Maybe you will marry one of my sisters and settle among us. But you Englishmen never settle here. You do your job, you hoard the profit, and as soon as possible you retire to your distant island. I don't mind, though, since I plan to accompany you when you go.

"All this that I tell you is secret, please, at least while we live under my father's roof. But many years from now, when someone asks you to describe your time here, you may report this conversation word for word, as well as you can remember it. You will remember accurately, won't you? Or do all imperialists have an imperialist memory? Will you represent me fairly? Because I think, sir, that in the future someone shall want to hear about me. I am a prince, after all, and you are a prince's tutor."

B's Proposition

There is a tavern, unmarked but not unknown, on the outskirts of Rye. Except for the tile roof rising above the tangle of holly, the tavern, a gray brick structure with stucco molding, can't be seen from the road. B wouldn't know how to give directions to the tavern to someone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

approaching by car. He prefers to walk there. Usually, he walks alone.

He begins at the railway station, walks across the tracks, past the jackdaws pecking at the gravel, and follows a raised path leading to a farmhouse. In front of the farmhouse he climbs over a stile and walks up a grassy slope dotted with sheep droppings. At the top of the hill he climbs over another stile. On the other side of Leesam Lane he follows a track that leads past an abandoned farm and the charred frame of a barn to a stream. He crosses the stream and continues through a small clump of trees and along the edges of several fields. Few people traverse this path, so it is up to B to keep the way clear. He carries a hunting knife whenever he walks to the tavern. In the early summer the journey takes him two hours instead of one, and his calves burn from nettles for the rest of the day.

At the end of the last field he goes through a gate and hurries past Flint Cottage, always with his hat pulled low over his forehead. He knows the owners, was on occasion their dinner guest, until he made one of his typical social gaffes, something about the hostess's hair, he can't remember exactly what he said but he does remember the glowering eyes of the woman. He hasn't been invited back.

In the meadow behind All Saints' Church in Iden Park B rests and takes refreshment. In summer he brings only a pint of strawberries. By the time he reaches the church the brown paper is always stained red, the strawberries inside warm and partly mashed. He lies in the grass, holds a large, misshapen strawberry by its green tuft, and lowers it into his mouth with his eyes closed. He eats all the strawberries this way, one by one, relishing the luxurious surprise as the seeded skin touches his tongue.

After he finishes eating he dozes for a few minutes in the sun. His large body always feels boyish and light when he wakes, like a feather on the enormous bed of grass. He has read somewhere that, according to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ancients, beyond the Pillars of Hercules the air is full of feathers. How close they were to the truth: Beyond the Pillars of Hercules lies America, a continent full of feathers. B, an American by birth but a stranger wherever he goes, is a feather, blown about, from time to time picked up and used to decorate a hat but soon discarded. Though he claims to be an expert seducer he rarely takes the initiative. Even now, he waits passively for some young boy to come along. What boy wouldn't pick up a handsome feather lying in the grass? B spends most of his life waiting. An expert seducer? As seductive as any ornament—and as useless.

After he leaves Iden Park, B follows the road toward Houghton Green and Appledore, then turns onto the footpath that leads through the holly into the tavern yard. Inside the tavern he sits at a round table covered with green felt and drinks gin. Despite its secluded location, the tavern is never empty—carpenters, lorry drivers, gardeners, and housewives stop in during the day for a pint and a game of dominoes, and the proprietor's children are always chasing one another through the room. On one visit a little red-haired nymph had met B at the door of the tavern. He'd bent down to kiss her on the cheek, but she had lifted a cane, tucked the curled handle under her arm, pointed the stick at B, and chortled to imitate a machine gun's rattle before she ran away.

Ordinarily, B stays aloof in the tavern. He enjoys drinking by himself in public places. At social gatherings, conversation dilutes the alcohol, and a man can't appreciate his intoxication. Alone, B can feel the gin taking effect, can enjoy the gradual increase of buoyancy until after an hour his body feels light again, not like a feather on the grass but like a feather floating on the choppy surface of a lake. Floating. B will drink until the midafternoon closing time, and then he'll make the long journey through the fields back to Rye.

"There is a secluded tavern on the outskirts of Rye," B says to K. "I'd like to take you there, someday." And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

K, eucalyptus K, finally frees his hand and draws back with an indignant jerk as though he has burnt his elegant, tender, noble fingers on B's shoulder.

The Challenge

K: "How come you are in such a mess?"

B: "Take me on as a patient and find out."

K: "For my own sake? No thank you, I have little curiosity about others."

B: "You are not going to refuse me?"

K: "First let us see whether we are the sort of persons who can work together."

B: "Then I'd better warn you—I have no unconscious. Now you're going to refuse me."

K: "I am not going to refuse you. Not yet, at least. First I am going to offer you a drink. And then we shall see what we shall see."

Temperature of Equilibrium

K doesn't know yet, not after this first meeting, that B was a prisoner of war in Japan. K doesn't know that in 1936 B left the school where he was studying toward a law degree and went to work in a coal mine for a year. K doesn't know that in B's spare time, when he has no diplomatic obligations and isn't pursuing young boys, he is carrying out experiments on guinea pigs in a makeshift laboratory in his Marylebone flat. His purpose: to accumulate data on animal procreation. K would never have suspected that B has any scientific interest whatsoever. But over the next thirty years K will hear at length about B's significant secrets, his past addictions and his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

latest obsessions, as B continues to live with the same intensity that is so passionate and so destructive.

B will fall in and out of love, will be convicted of pederasty and spend fourteen months in solitary confinement, will lose his job at the embassy and devote himself to scientific research, will publish, and eventually will accept a teaching post at a major American university. He will dream, and K will interpret his dreams. He will confide in K, and K will give him advice, will help B to become more B than B until there is no portion of B's psyche untouched by K. B will become K's arabesque, the patterns delightfully intricate and always symmetrical. B will die without ever regretting K's influence or trying to tamper with the design. B lacks the power, if not the will, to design his own life, and he will give himself up to K. But after his death B will dominate K ("Nothing which has once been formed can perish," Freud wrote), will live on like a parasite, feeding off his host and eventually devouring him. Only after his patient is gone will K admit to himself that from the very first moment of physical contact he was obsessed.

It is the intimacy that makes this initial analytic session more important than any other, forcing K to make a commitment. Yes, he will work with B. He will work upon B. At the end of the session K announces that B does have therapeutic potential, that B might prove to be a valuable patient. They will toast to their new relationship.

K pours two drinks, holds his tumbler up to the light, gently tips the glass so the generous measure of Scotch coats the ice cubes. "Ice," he murmurs. "A luxury." Most Americans take ice for granted, but K, raised in the Punjab, land of fire and water, still considers ice something of a miracle. Ice is water in its purest state, especially ice taken from the tray of K's office freezer. K drinks only the finest Scotch and so insists upon the finest ice made with bottled Alpine water, snow water without traces of chloride, sulfates, nitrates, or ammonia, without

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

traces of human sewage or industrial waste. Pure ice with milky threads at the center of each cube, pure Scotch the color of butterscotch. Luxurious purity. He raises his glass and motions to B, who does the same.

The ice cubes rattle in the glasses. It is important to drink Scotch chilled but not diluted, to finish the drink before the bulk of ice has melted. B drinks with admirable alacrity—not piggishly but with the quick, dainty sips of someone trying both to extend and appreciate a rare pleasure. As B and K drink, from time to time savoring the smell of the liquor, they discuss the artwork in K's office. B learns that the dancer on the pedestal is an original Giacometti. And the pastel cityscape is a Braque. During pauses in the conversation the men swallow in virtual unison, though B, the larger man, takes in more with each sip and finishes before K. He sets his glass on the oak table without thinking about the ring the condensing moisture will leave in the wood. K likes this about B. His nonchalance. B is no aristocrat, but K detects the vestiges of an aristocratic sensibility.

After they have scheduled a second session and agreed upon a fee, after K has escorted B to the lift and returned alone to his office, shutting the door behind him with such force that the polo cap falls to the floor, K feels unusually optimistic, despite himself. Yes, he'd made a mistake in touching B—his hand feels dirty, as though contaminated by B's perversity. He would have to redefine "the correct psychic distance" at their next meeting. But perhaps something had been gained from the brief contact. Perhaps K has established the foundations for a successful transference.

A borderline case. And borderline cases are the most challenging, K knows. How dreadfully easy it is to tip the patient over the edge, especially in the early, blundering phases of the analysis. He must be careful with B, must initially withhold interpretation. Let B do the work. Let B work for him. There is potential here, it's clear to K that there is potential. He stares at B's glass, recalling,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without the help of his process notes, B's lengthy narrative, sinks so deeply into revery that he doesn't hear the six chimes of the Galatea clock and doesn't start preparing himself for the photo session with his fiancée. There is nothing further from his mind than his fiancée right now. He wants to savor this moment. As the nuggets of ice melt into the puddle of lemon-tinted liquid, K's elation grows.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Poems by May Sarton

The Ender, The Beginner

Becoming eighty
Might be nothing much
If I could be well,
But it feels weighty

Because I am in touch
Because I have been ill
With Heaven and with Hell,
Unbalanced on that crutch,

A place of no return
And of no mending
With a long life to burn
And its long ending.

The ender, the beginner,
The child and the old soul,
The mystic and the sinner
At eighty remain whole.

I am still whole and merry
And when all's said and done
Rejoice in my strange story,
Ardent and alone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rinsing the Eye

There is a thin glass
Between me and everything I see.
The glass is pain.
How to slide it away,
Unblur my vision?

"We must rinse the eye,"
My old friend, the poet,
Used to say.
But that was in Belgium
Many years ago.

Raymond is dead
And I am in exile,
Old and ill.

My eye turns inward
To rest on three poplars
And a lost garden.
The delphinium is very blue.
The columbine, purple and white,
Trembles in the breeze
And there are tall yellow daisies.

"We must rinse the eye,"
The poet reminds me
While his wife calls out
To the children to hurry.
The garden must be watered
Before dark,
And we run for the pails.

Nothing is blurred now,
Everything is quite clear
In the poignant evening light.
An explosion of memory
Has rinsed my eye.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coming into Eighty

Coming into eighty
I slow my ship down
For a safe landing.
It has been battered,
One sail torn, the rudder
Sometimes wobbly.
We are hardly a glorious sight.
It has been a long voyage
Through time, travail and triumph,
Eighty years
Of learning what to be
And how to become it.

One day the ship will decompose
And then what will become of me?
Only a breath
Gone into nothingness
Alone
Or a spirit of air and fire
Set free?
Who knows?

Greet us at landfall
The old ship and me,
But we can't stay anchored.
Soon we must set sail
On the last mysterious voyage
Everybody takes
Toward death.
Without my ship there,
Wish me well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maja Herman

Under the Glass Bell

The dew drops from the white magnolia tree, same as
the last year.
She will stand by the window, calmer than in winter.
Caught by the scent of spring, she will bring stolen
branches
to the room under the glass. She will smell a stone pine
which is not there. And then the squirrels will come.
They will stare at her. For an instant or two. She will move
from the window as if caught. She will light a
cigarette.
The rustle of a curtain will move them too, and then
probably
someone will pass by, a silhouette, to disappear
in the gothic wall, with books under the arm, without
noticing
the magnolia tree. The time will fold in pleats of the
curtain
soaked in the smell of dust. And this will not be
new, either.

—translated from the Serbo-Croatian
by the author and Mark Strand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

James Laughlin

The Moths

Remembering Nabokov

A dark damp night and a sudden hatch
of moths has covered the glass of the

big window in the living room attract-
ed by the light where I sit reading

they make a solid curtain of flutter-
ing little shapes they are desperate

they are the kind which only lives for
one night and they must reach the light

there must be thousands of them there
is nothing remarkable in this invasion

no metaphor for the poet to play with
but now again it is a night some forty

years ago the summer when Volya came
to hunt lepidoptera at the mountain

lodge in Utah he had turned the inside
lights against the picture window and

the outside was swarming with moths
he put on a miner's headlamp and stood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on a stepladder on the terrace plucking
the moths into a cyanide jar with his

tweezers next morning when he examin-
ed the bodies with a jeweler's ocular

he was ecstatic eleven of the male
moths were the variants (detectable by

a mutation in the genitalia) which were
first recorded by the French lepidopter-

ologist D'Imbert when he visited the
Wasatch range in 1896 later Volya told

me that he traded his duplicates with
collectors in Europe for rarities from

Manchuria & Tibet that he had never seen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oskar Pastior

sestina with interview

oh of course I was often a second time
in rome—but at certain times I was also
actually there for the third or fifth time. when were
you there the last time? that I can in fact
specify: it was when for the first time I went away.
but since then were you ever again in rome?

no the first time I was to be sure still in rome
but not constantly more often like the second time—
that did not occur until after once there I went away.
but your last time in rome were you also
constantly thinking of actually going away? in fact
I always constantly think of it often: if ever you were

such a one there who often went away, you were
at certain times also quite definitely not in rome.
but do you also constantly realize when in fact
you at certain times and actually at which certain time
had to go away and as a consequence of this also
wanted to at a time there when nothing else went
away?

well you see when for the first time there I went away
I hadn't realized that yet. But you were
at certain times then often a third time also
there again without ever going away at a time in
rome
when nothing else went away? no it was the second
time
that happened—at certain times I still realize that in
fact

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since you see actually I so constantly was often in fact
in rome that at certain times I in no way went away
because not even once had I the first time
gone away. no wait a minute so you were
actually once after that truly in rome?
certainly—actually you see I was still there also

and constantly was without any interruption also
there a second and third time just in fact
like the last time I was once again in rome
at a time when nothing else went away.
but tell me that last time in rome were
you in that case actually more often a second time?

oh of course at certain times I was then only one time
in rome before I more and more rarely went away—
because also the last time there it was dark in rome.

—translated from the German
by Harry Mathews

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mark Halliday

Years Ago

It was about seven or eight years ago.
It was between the portly three-storey white house
and the faded red shed behind the lettuce patch.
At the edges of each photograph in the disorderly album;
it was in that back and forth

when the problem was there and the people
tried a thing or two, the wind made the shutters rattle
and a bicycle leaned by the cellar door
and the people crossed the yard to locate
a box of tomatoes or the toolbox and carry it back.
Somebody
carried it back and brought it over
and made a sly joke about the dance on Saturday
and propped up that fence. It's

not something you can touch,
not a variable in your strategy
because—just because this was
about seven or eight years ago, in the cloud,
in the local cloud of the things known there,
what was handled and maneuvered around
by those ones there knowing. With their hands
on the porch railing and voices out back
in the lettuce patch and the skeptical look in their eyes
when someone predicted triumph in seven or eight years,
and the letters written then, by them,
now in a crate upstairs
including the scratchy paragraphs about Courbet
that someone recollects seven years from now
and what they mostly thought then, the oddly chosen
book they disagreed about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and who loved who on those purple-sky evenings.
You can't get a word in edgewise—you can't get
the time of day. The people talked it over,
inaudible between the tall white house
and the curve of Route 302, moving
practically through the yellow grass in the turning
sphere of what they had to know. It was
about seven or eight years ago.

When was it? Twenty years ago.
Some thirty-three years ago.
When was it? Let me see,
more than forty years ago.
Oh yes? Well then. That's really interesting.
I'd like to hear more about it. But

let's us go, you and me, right now,
to a Mexican restaurant.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Uli Becker

The God-like Flash

In the beginning is the paper, blank and void.
That's the way you buy it, the unwritten "word".
The clean slate of your law-abiding citizen
is a red toreador's cape to a worked-up poet.

Unbearable, this emptiness. This desert cries
out for a few poetical strokes. Something must
bring it to life! Nothing comes from nothing,
it always takes two— and three is even better.

For me it's Julietta and the muse who do the trick.
They fructify me. And with ménages à trois like
ours, it always pays to use fresh sheets. Stains,
after all, are human. That's what it's all about!

(Not in the case of Mary: her union with Joseph
plus the Holy Ghost made up that legendary
Bermuda Triangle in which all sins vanished
without a trace— her sheets so virgin white!)

I wake up with a craving for pickled herring—
Hurray, a good sign! I've felt my first flash,
letting me know I'm pregnant with a new poem.
Julietta says I ought to rest and pamper myself

but right away I have this urgent need to knit.
I sense the child of man stirring inside of me
and these kicks I get just below the heart—
a live one, the little bugger— just like daddy!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To me it doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl,
as long as it's a domestic birth, here at my
writing table, going into labor, relaxed,
breathing calmly, making certain not to press.

Pencil sharpened? Paper? Everything set to go?
And THERE, there it comes, head over heels
of course! Oh, I can't describe the feeling,
incredible— to be a man, and yet, a mother!

—translated from the German
by Charles Paul

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Land of Mashriq

Naguib Mahfouz

This excerpt is from Naguib Mahfouz's The Journey of Ibn Fattouma, *a parable-like short novel published in Arabic in 1983; the English translation is forthcoming this year from Doubleday. It is the journal of a traveler, desolate over the thwarting of his marriage to Halima, the daughter of a Sheikh. He sets out with a caravan to explore the non-Islamic world, the final goal a mysterious and distant country named Gebel, from which no one has ever returned to tell the tale. The following episode describes his arrival at the first stop on the journey—the Land of Mashriq.*

The column of camels began to move off to the rhythm of the singing of the cameleer and my heart became immersed in the tender pain of saying farewell. Deep within me there stirred memories of my mother and of Halima, wrapped around in a grief that encompassed my whole motherland. In the heart of the darkness I mumbled, "O God, bless the steps I take."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The darkness began to clear and streaks of light loomed on the horizon until it became tinged with a smiling redness, and the eyebrow of the sun emerged, unrolling light over a limitless desert. The caravan showed itself like a dancing line on a cosmic surface challenging sublimity. My body plunged into a successively monotonous movement under waves of gushing light, a gliding breeze, a heat that rose upwards giving warning of its ferocity, and a constant landscape of yellow sands and a clear blue sky. I took refuge within myself from the single panorama and sank into insistent memories, bitter emotions, and rosy dreams. At every spring of water we would make a stop for food, ablutions, prayers, and conversation. I got to know a few of the merchants accompanying me, who cast strange glances upon the sole traveler.

"I shall go right to the land of Gebel," I explained boastfully.

"And what is Gebel?" one of them inquired scornfully.

A second man said proudly, "We're in the lands of Islam."

A third said, "Trading is part of being civilized and God has ordered that we should be civilized."

A fourth said, "The Prophet, may the blessings and peace of God be upon him, was a merchant."

"And he was also a traveler and a man who emigrated from his place of birth," I said, as though making excuses for myself.

"You'll fritter away your fortune in traveling and will return home poor."

"He who believes in work will not know poverty," I said, suppressing my anger.

I had a respect for trading, but I believed that life was as much a journey as it was commerce. The days followed one another, long and heavy, hot during the day, cold at night. I saw the stars as I had never seen them before,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sublime, enchanting, infinite, and I knew that my sadness for my mother was greater than I had imagined and that my love for Halima was too strong to be influenced by the night and the day and the stars and looking towards the unknown. We had been going for nearly a month when from afar the walls of Mashriq came into view, at which al-Qani ibn Hamdis said, "We shall camp at the Blue Well and shall enter the land at midnight."

We prepared ourselves, and when we had prayed the evening prayer, I heard someone whisper, "The last prayer until we return from the lands of idolatry."

I was extremely disturbed, but I was preparing myself for a new and long life, so I said to myself, "God is forgiving and merciful."

Just before midnight the caravan approached the new land. We were met at the entrance by a man naked but for a loincloth. In the light of the torch flares he appeared tall and thin; my companions said he was the director of customs. The man spoke in a stentorian voice. "Welcome to Mashriq, capital of the land of Mashriq. It greets traders and travelers, and he who keeps himself to himself will meet only with what is good and beautiful."

The caravan entered between two ranks of guards. The traders continued on to the market, while a guide took me to the inn of the foreigners. The guide made the camel kneel down in front of a large pavilion like a barracks. When he carried my traveling bags inside, I realized that it was the inn. It was divided into two wings separated by an extended reception hall; each wing contained adjoining rooms whose sides were constructed of hair cloth. The room chosen for me was simple, even primitive; its floor was sandy, and it possessed a bed (which consisted of a wooden board laid on the ground), a chest for clothes, and cushions in the middle. No sooner had I finished checking through my bags than I hurried to bed with the eagerness of someone deprived

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of normal sleep for a full month. I slept deeply until woken by the day's heat. As though unwell, I rose from my bed and passed through into the reception hall, which was crammed with guests, all of whom were seated in front of their rooms having breakfast. A short man, slightly stout, wearing only a loincloth, came up to me. "I am Fam, the owner of the inn," he said, smiling. "Did you have a good night?"

"Fine, thank you," I said, with the sweat pouring down my forehead.

"Shall I bring you breakfast?"

"I'd really like to have a wash," I said with longing.

He led me to the end of the reception hall, and drew back a curtain, where I found what I needed for washing and for combing my hair and small beard. Returning to my room, I found that Fam had brought a small round table and was laying out breakfast for me.

"Can I make my prayers in my room?" I asked.

"Someone might see you," he warned, "and you would run the risk of trouble."

He brought me a dish with some dried dates, milk, and barley bread. I ate with pleasure till I had satisfied my hunger.

"I used to love traveling," he told me.

"Are you from Mashriq?" I asked.

"I'm originally from the desert. Then I took up residence in Mashriq."

I was delighted to find he was a former traveler.

"The land of Gebel is the ultimate goal of my journey," I said.

"It is the goal of many. But material considerations prevented me from reaching it."

"What do you know about it, Mr. Fam?" I inquired eagerly.

"Nothing," he said, smiling, "except that it is sometimes described as the miracle of the age. And yet I have never met a single man who has visited it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An inner voice told me that I would be the first human being to be given the chance of touring the land of Gebel and of making known its secret to the world.

"Are you staying long in Mashriq?" he asked.

"Ten days. After that I shall proceed with the caravan of al-Qani ibn Hamdis."

"Excellent. Go, look, and enjoy your time. It's enough for you to wear a loincloth and nothing more."

"I can't go out without a cloak," I said disapprovingly.

"You'll see for yourself," he said, laughing. "I forgot to ask you your name."

"Qindil Muhammad al-Innabi."

He raised his hand to his head in salutation and went off. At noon I left the inn wrapped round in a light, loosely woven cloak and wearing my turban to protect myself from the sun. I was astonished at the heat of spring and wondered what the heat of summer would be like. On leaving the inn I was appalled by two things: the nakedness and the empty space.

The people, women and men alike, were as naked as the day they were born. Nakedness there is a commonplace; it attracts no attention and arouses no interest. Everyone goes his own way, finding nothing strange about it, apart from foreigners like myself who are wearing clothes. Their bodies are bronze-colored and thin, not gracefully so but apparently from undernourishment, though they mostly looked contented, even cheerful. I found it difficult to avoid a sense of abnormality in the clothes I was strutting around in; I found even greater difficulty in turning away my gaze from exciting spectacles of nudity which fired my blood. "What land is this that hurls a young man like me into the flames of temptation!"

The other strange thing was this vast, empty space; it was as though I had moved from one desert to another. Was this in truth the capital city of Mashriq? Where were the palaces? The houses? The streets? The alley-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ways? Nothing but open ground, with grass growing along the edges, on which cattle grazed. Here and there were groupings of tents set up haphazardly; in front were gathered women and young girls, spinning or milking cows and goats. They too were naked; and though possessed of a certain beauty this was hidden by filth, neglect, and poverty. In fact I criticize too harshly the outward signs of misery in this pagan country, which, being pagan, did perhaps have some excuse. But what excuse could I make for similar signs in my own Islamic country? "Look, record, and admit the bitter truth."

While my eyes were roving round in surprise and perplexity, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a sensation of being passionately in love, a feeling drawn out of the depths by the lover hidden within me. The memory of Halima overpowered me and her image enveloped the vastness with the warmth of sunrays. For a time I was at a loss; but then I became aware of a young girl running from the direction of the inn, and moving like an arrow towards a dense crowd, where she sank into the torrential mass and disappeared from sight. Perhaps I had spotted her previously; perhaps I had spotted her while I was occupied with the sights and she had made her impression when I was half asleep or in a daze. It was she who was behind the deep emotional agitation that swept over me. She was in truth Mashriqi, bronze and naked, but in her face she very closely resembled Halima, my lost love. I decided to be content with the thought that she was the Halima of Mashriq, and that I would see her again. I roamed about from place to place, seeing nothing new, enduring a lassitude that became more and more intense, with my heart crushed by grief and distress and my imagination searching for the Halima of Mashriq.

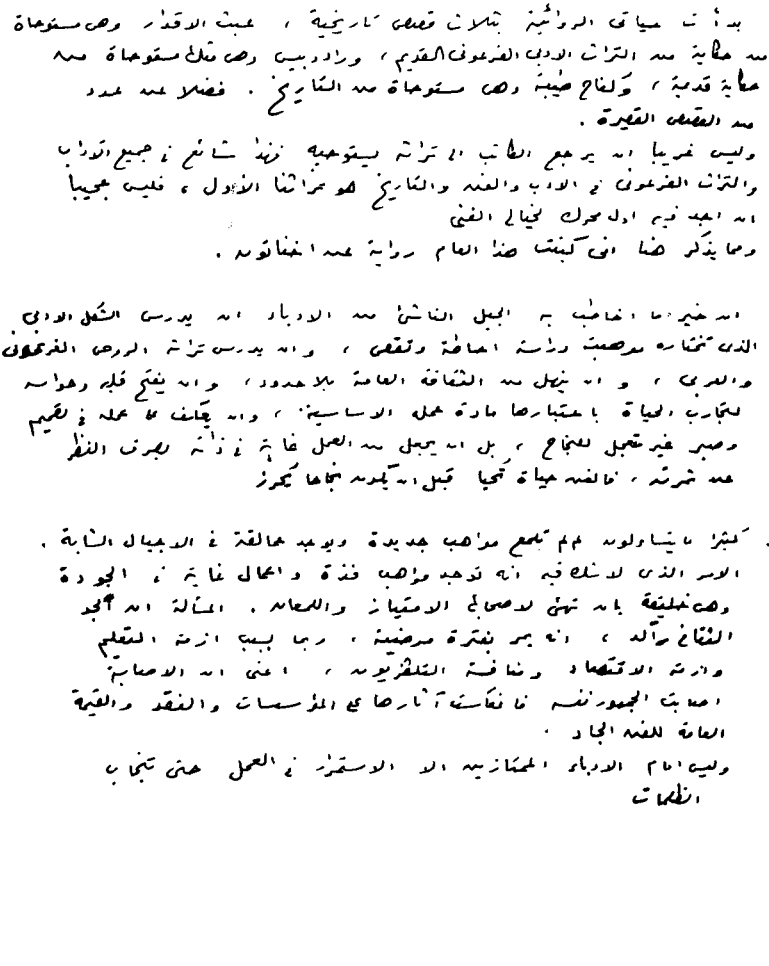
Away from home, I am remolded in a new form; in the depths of me there come into existence bold, impetuous longings to satisfy desires, to pursue adventures. I relin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quish one civilization and give myself over to a new one. I yearn for life far away from observers: observers who, while manifesting themselves outwardly, also throb within oneself . . .

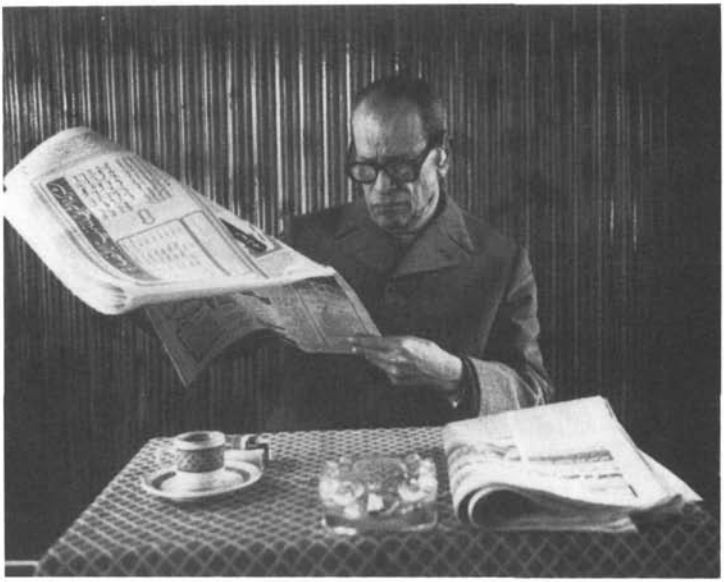
—translated from the Arabic
by Denys Johnson-Davies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A manuscript page by Naguib Mahfouz from an article for the Cairo newspaper al-Ahram.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



© Robert Lyons.

Naguib Mahfouz

The Art of Fiction CXXIX

Naguib Mahfouz credits Hafiz Najib—thief, jailbird, renowned cop baiter and author of twenty-two detective novels—with being his earliest literary influence. The ten-year-old Mahfouz read Najib's Johnson's Son *on the recommendation of an elementary school classmate, and the experience, Mahfouz avows, changed his life.*

Mahfouz's subsequent influences have been many and various. In high school Mahfouz became preoccupied with Taha Husayn, whose revolutionary critical work, Fil-shi'r al-Jahili, *provoked a hysterical reaction from conservative Asharite circles*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when it was published in 1926. In college Mahfouz read Salama Musa, who as the editor of the magazine al-Majalla al-Jadida *later published Mahfouz's first novel, and from whom Mahfouz says he learned "to believe in science, socialism and tolerance."*

In the years following the Second World War, Mahfouz retreated from his socialist ideals to a deep pessimism. He spent much of his time engaged in gloomy discussions of life and the purposelessness of literature with fellow writers 'Adil Kamil and Ahmad Zaki Makhluf, on the lawn area by Cairo's Jala' Bridge which they dubbed "the ominous circle." In the fifties he experimented with Sufi mysticism, seeking in it answers to the metaphysical questions not addressed by science. These days Mahfouz appears to have settled on a philosophy which combines scientific socialism with a concern for the spiritual—a combination anticipated by the definition of fiction he advanced in 1945: Fiction is art for the industrial age. It represents a synthesis of man's passion for fact and his age-old love affair with the imagination.

Born in Cairo in 1911, Mahfouz started writing at the age of seventeen and has since written more than thirty novels. Until he retired from the civil service at sixty, he wrote at night, in his spare time—unable, despite his critical successes, to depend on writing for a living. His first published work, Abath al-Aqdar, *appeared in 1939, the first in a series of three historical tales set in the time of the pharaohs. Mahfouz originally intended to expand this series into a thirty- or forty-novel history of Egypt in the style of Sir Walter Scott, but he abandoned the project to work on his contemporary Cairo novels, the first of which,* Khan al-Khalili, *appeared in 1945.*

Although much acclaimed in other parts of the Arab world, Mahfouz did not acquire a significant reputation in Egypt until the publication of The Cairo Trilogy *in 1957. This three thousand-page epic portrays life in middle-class Cairo between the world wars, and was immediately hailed as* the *novel of its generation. Mahfouz became known abroad in the late sixties, when a number of his works were translated into English,*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

French, Russian and German. In 1988 Mahfouz achieved worldwide recognition when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Now eighty, Mahfouz lives in the Cairo suburb of Agouza with his wife and two daughters. He avoids public exposure, especially inquiries into his private life, which might become, as he puts it, "a silly topic in journals and radio programs." The series of meetings that made up this interview were held on a succession of Thursdays, each time at precisely eleven o'clock. The interviewer sat on a chair to Mahfouz's left, next to his good ear.

Mahfouz in person is somewhat reserved, but always candid and direct. He laughs frequently and wears an old-fashioned dark blue suit, which he buttons to the top. He smokes, and he likes his coffee bitter.

INTERVIEWER

When did you start writing?

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

In 1929. All my stories were rejected. Salama Musa—the editor of *Majalla*—used to say to me: You have potential, but you're not there yet. September, 1939 I remember well because it was the beginning of World War II, Hitler's attack on Poland. My story, "Abath al-Aqdar," was published, a sort of surprise gift from the *Majalla* publishers. It was an immensely important event in my life.

INTERVIEWER

Did writing and publication then follow easily?

MAHFOUZ

No . . . though after that first publication a friend of mine, a writer, came to me and told me about his brother who owned a printing press. He formed a publication

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

committee with some colleagues who had had a little success. We began publishing in 1943 with some regularity. We published a story of mine every year.

INTERVIEWER

But you never depended on your writing for a living?

MAHFOUZ

No. I was always a government employee. On the contrary, I *spent* on literature—on books and paper. I didn't make any money from my writing until much later. I published about eighty stories for nothing. Even my first novels I published for nothing, all to help the committee.

INTERVIEWER

When did you begin to make money from your writing?

MAHFOUZ

When my short stories were translated into English, French and German. "Zabalawi" in particular was extremely successful and made me more money than any other story.

The first novel of mine to be translated was *Midaq Alley.* The translation was first published by a Lebanese named Khayyat. Neither I nor the translator made any money because Khayyat cheated us. Heinemann published it again around 1970. After that it was translated into French, and other translations of my work soon followed.

INTERVIEWER

Could you tell us about the notorious Kharafish group? Who belongs to it, and how was it formed?

MAHFOUZ

We first became acquainted in 1943: Mustafa Mahmud, Ahmad Baha al-Din, Salah Jahin, Muhammad Afifi.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We would hold discussions on art and on current political issues. *Kharafish* means "hoodlum"—those types found on the fringes of demonstrations and who start looting at the first opportunity—they are the kharafish. Ahmed Mazhar [one of Egypt's leading actors] gave us the name. At first we used to meet at Muhammad Afifi's house. Sometimes we would go to a place called Sahara City, near the pyramids. Now we go to the film director Tewfiq Saleh's place because he has a balcony on the tenth floor, facing the Nile. There are four or five of us left.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have much contact with the younger generation of Egyptian writers?

MAHFOUZ

Every Friday evening I attend a session at the Casino Kasr el-Nil, to which new writers are invited. Many come: poets, writers, literary types. . . . Since I stopped working for the government in 1971 I have had more time for friends.

INTERVIEWER

What role did the political situation prior to 1952 play in your life?

MAHFOUZ

I was about seven when the 1919 revolution took place. I became more and more affected by it and more and more enthusiastic about the cause. Everyone I knew was for the Wafd Party and freedom from colonization. Later I became much more involved in political life as an outspoken follower of Zaghlul Pasha Saad. I still consider that involvement one of the most important things I have done in my life. But I've never *worked* in politics, never been a member of an official committee or a political party. Although I was a Wafdist, I never wanted to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known as a party member; as a writer I wanted the total freedom which a party member can never have.

INTERVIEWER

And 1952?

MAHFOUZ

I was happy with that revolution. But unfortunately it did not bring about democracy.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think progress has been made toward democracy and freedom since the time of Nasser and Sadat?

MAHFOUZ

Oh yes, there's no doubt about that. In Nasser's time one feared the walls. Everyone was afraid. We would sit in the cafés, too afraid to talk. We would stay at home, too afraid to talk. I was afraid to talk to my children about anything that happened before the revolution: I was worried they would go to school and say something that would be misinterpreted. Sadat made us feel more secure. Hosni Mubarak? His constitution is not democratic, but *he* is democratic. We can voice our opinions now. The press is free. We can sit in our homes and speak loudly as though we were in England. But the Constitution does need revising.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the Egyptian people are ready for full democracy? Do they really understand how it works?

MAHFOUZ

In Egypt today most people are concerned with getting bread to eat. Only some of the educated really understand how democracy works. No one with a family has a free moment even to discuss it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Have you had much trouble with censorship? Have you had to rewrite any of your manuscripts?

MAHFOUZ

Not recently, but during World War II *Al-Qawra al-Jadida* and *Radibus* were censored. I was called a leftist. Censors called *Radibus* inflamatory because in it the people kill a king, and our king was still alive. I explained to them that it was simply a historical tale, but they claimed that it was false history, that the king in question had not been killed by the people but had died under "mysterious circumstances."

INTERVIEWER

Didn't the censors also object to *The Children of Gabelawi*?

MAHFOUZ

They did. Even though I was at the time in charge of all artistic censorship, the head of literary censorship advised me not to publish the book in Egypt in order to prevent conflict with the Al-Azhar—the main seat of Islam in Cairo. It was published in Beirut but not allowed into Egypt. This was in 1959, in Nasser's time. The book still can't be bought here. People smuggle it in.

INTERVIEWER

What did you intend with *Children of Gabelawi*? Did you intend it to be provocative?

MAHFOUZ

I wanted the book to show that science has a place in society, just as a new religion does, and that science does not necessarily conflict with religious values. I wanted it to persuade readers that if we reject science, we reject the common man. Unfortunately, it has been misinterpreted by those who don't know how to read a story. Although

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the book is about ghettos and those who run them, it was interpreted as being about the prophets themselves. Because of this interpretation, the story was, naturally, considered shocking, supposedly showing the prophets walking barefoot, acting cruelly . . . but of course it's an *allegory*. It's not as though allegories are unknown in our tradition. In the story of "Kalila and Dimnah," for example, a lion represents the Sultan. But no one claims that the author turned the Sultan into an animal! Something is *meant* by the story . . . an allegory is not meant to be taken literally. There is a great lack of comprehension on the part of some readers.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think about the Salman Rushdie case? Do you think a writer should have absolute freedom?

MAHFOUZ

I'll tell you exactly what I think: Every society has its traditions, laws and religious beliefs, which it tries to preserve. From time to time individuals appear who demand changes. I believe that society has the right to defend itself, just as the individual has the right to attack that with which he disagrees. If a writer comes to the conclusion that his society's laws or beliefs are no longer valid or even harmful, it is his duty to speak up. But he must be ready to pay the price for his outspokenness. If he is not ready to pay that price, he can choose to remain silent. History is full of people who went to prison or were burned at the stake for proclaiming their ideas. Society has always defended itself. Nowadays it does so with its police and its courts. I defend both the freedom of expression and society's right to counter it. I must pay the price for differing. It is the natural way of things.

INTERVIEWER

Did you read *The Satanic Verses*?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAHFOUZ

I didn't. By the time it appeared, I could no longer read very well—my eyesight has deteriorated a lot recently. But the American cultural attaché in Alexandria explained the book to me chapter by chapter. I found the insults in it unacceptable. Rushdie insults even the women of the Prophet! Now, I can argue with *ideas*, but what should I do with insults? Insults are the business of the court. At the same time, I consider Khomeini's position equally dangerous. He does not have the right to pass judgement: That is not the Islamic way. According to Islamic principles, when a man is accused of heresy he is given the choice between repentance and punishment. Rushdie was not given that choice. I have always defended Rushdie's right to write and say what he wants in terms of ideas. But he does not have the right to insult anything, especially a prophet or anything considered holy. Don't you agree?

INTERVIEWER

I see your point. . . . Does the Koran discuss insults or blasphemy?

MAHFOUZ

Of course. The Koran and the laws of all civilized nations legislate against the vilification of religions.

INTERVIEWER

Were you religious as a child? Did you go to the mosque with your father every Friday?

MAHFOUZ

I was especially religious when I was young. But my father put no pressure on me to go to Friday prayers, even though he went every week. Later on I began to feel strongly that religion should be open; a closed-minded religion is a curse. Excessive concern with religion seems to me a last resort for people who have been exhausted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by life. I consider religion very important but also potentially dangerous. If you want to move people, you look for a point of sensitivity, and in Egypt nothing moves people as much as religion. What makes the peasant work? Religion. Because of this, religion should be interpreted in an open manner. It should speak of love and humanity. Religion is related to progress and civilization, not just emotions. Unfortunately today's interpretations of religion are often backward and contradict the needs of civilization.

INTERVIEWER

What about women who cover their heads, or even their faces and hands? Is this an example of religion contradicting the needs of civilization?

MAHFOUZ

Head covering has become a style, a fashion. It has no more meaning than that for most. But I do fear religious fanaticism . . . a pernicious development, totally opposed to mankind.

INTERVIEWER

Do you pray these days?

MAHFOUZ

Sometimes. But age prevents me at present. Between you and me, I consider religion an essential human behavior. Still, it's clearly more important to treat one's fellow man well than to be always praying and fasting and touching one's head to a prayer mat. God did not intend religion to be an exercise club.

INTERVIEWER

Have you been to Mecca?

MAHFOUZ

No.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Do you want to go?

MAHFOUZ

No. I hate crowds.

INTERVIEWER

How old were you when you married?

MAHFOUZ

Thirty-seven or thirty-eight.

INTERVIEWER

Why so late?

MAHFOUZ

I was busy with my job and with writing. I was a government employee in the morning and a writer in the evening. My day was completely filled. I was afraid of marriage . . . especially when I saw how busy my brothers and sisters were with social events because of it. This one went to visit people, that one invited people. I had the impression that married life would take up all my time. I saw myself drowning in visits and parties. No freedom.

INTERVIEWER

Even now, don't you refuse to attend dinners and receptions?

MAHFOUZ

I never attend such events. I never even visit my friends. I meet them at the Casino Kasr el-Nil or at one or two other coffee houses.

INTERVIEWER

Is that why you didn't go to Sweden to receive your Nobel Prize? Too many visits, dinners, parties . . . ?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAHFOUZ

No, not exactly. As much as I would have loved to travel when I was young, nowadays I no longer have the desire. Even a two-week trip would disrupt my lifestyle.

INTERVIEWER

You must have been asked many times about your reaction to receiving the Nobel. Did you have any inkling beforehand that you would win?

MAHFOUZ

None at all. My wife thought I deserved it, but I had always suspected the Nobel was a western prize; I thought they would never select an eastern writer. There was a rumor, though, that two Arab writers had been nominated: Yusef Idris and Adonis.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know you were being considered?

MAHFOUZ

No. I was at Al-Ahram that morning. Had I stayed half an hour longer I would have found out immediately. But I went home and had lunch instead. The news came across the tickers at Al-Ahram and they called my house. My wife woke me up to tell me, but I thought she was joking and wanted to go back to sleep. Then she told me Al-Ahram was on the phone. I picked up to hear someone saying, "Congratulations!" It was Mr. Basha. Now Mr. Basha sometimes plays jokes on me, so I didn't take him seriously. I went into the living room in my pyjamas and was just sitting down when the doorbell rang. Someone came in whom I assumed was a journalist, but he turned out to be the Swedish ambassador! So I excused myself to change . . . and that's how it happened.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Turning once more to your writing—do you work according to a regular schedule?

MAHFOUZ

I have always been compelled to. From eight till two I was at work. From four until seven I wrote. Then from seven until ten I read. This was my schedule every day except Friday. I have never had time to do as I please. But I stopped writing about three years ago.

INTERVIEWER

How do you come up with the characters and ideas for your stories?

MAHFOUZ

Let me put it this way. When you spend time with your friends, what do you talk about? Those things which made an impression on you that day, that week. . . . I write stories the same way. Events at home, in school, at work, in the street, these are the bases for a story. Some experiences leave such a deep impression that instead of talking about them at the club I work them into a novel.

Take, for instance, the case of a criminal who killed three people here recently. Beginning with that basic story, I would go on to make a number of decisions as to how to write it. I would choose, for example, whether to write the story from the point of view of the husband, the wife, the servant or the criminal. Maybe my sympathies lie with the criminal. These are the sorts of choices which make stories differ from one another.

INTERVIEWER

When you begin writing, do you allow the words to flow or do you prepare notes first? Do you start with a specific theme in mind?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAHFOUZ

My short stories come straight from the heart. For other works I do research first. Before beginning *The Cairo Trilogy*, for example, I did extensive research. I compiled a file on each character. If I hadn't done that I would have gotten lost and forgotten something. Sometimes a theme arises naturally out of the events in a story, and sometimes I will have one in mind before I begin. If I know beforehand that I want to portray a human being's ability to surmount whatever evil may befall him, I will create a hero capable of demonstrating that idea. But I also begin stories by writing about a character's behavior at length, allowing the theme to emerge later on.

INTERVIEWER

How much do you revise and rewrite before you consider a story finished?

MAHFOUZ

I make frequent revisions, I cross out a lot, I write all over the pages, even on the backs. Often my revisions are major. After I revise, I rewrite the story and send it to the publisher. Then I tear up all the old reworkings and throw them away.

INTERVIEWER

You never keep any of your notes? Many writers keep every word they have written! Don't you think it's interesting to study a writer's process by examining his revisions?

MAHFOUZ

It may well be, but it is simply not part of my culture to preserve notes. I have never heard of a writer preserving his early drafts. I have to discard my revisions—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otherwise my house would overflow with useless paper! Besides, I have terrible handwriting.

INTERVIEWER

Neither the short story nor the novel is part of the Arab literary heritage. How do you explain your success with these forms?

MAHFOUZ

We Arab writers did borrow the modern concept of the short story and the novel from the West, but by now they have been internalized in our own literature. Many translations came our way during the forties and fifties; we took their style to be simply the way stories were written. We used the western style to express our own themes and stories. But don't forget that our heritage includes such works as *Ayyam al-Arab*, which contains many stories—among them "Antar" and "Qays and Leila"—and of course *The Thousand and One Nights*.

INTERVIEWER

Do you identify with any of your characters?

MAHFOUZ

Kamal from the trilogy represents my own generation—our ideas, our choices, our dilemmas and psychological crises—and so his character is, in that sense, autobiographical. But he is universal at the same time. I also feel close to Abdul Gawad, the father . . . open to life in all its aspects, he loves his friends and he never wittingly hurts anyone. The two together represent both halves of my personality. Abdel Gawad is very gregarious, loves art and music; Kamal is inhibited and shy, serious and idealistic.

INTERVIEWER

Let's talk about a specific example of your writing: *The Thief and the Dogs.* How did you begin?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAHFOUZ

The story was inspired by a thief who terrorized Cairo for a while. His name was Mahmoud Suleiman. When he got out of prison he tried to kill his wife and his lawyer. They managed to escape unharmed, but he was killed in the process.

INTERVIEWER

Had his wife betrayed him, as in the novel?

MAHFOUZ

No . . . I created the story from his character. At the time I was suffering from a persistent and peculiar sense that I was being pursued, and also the conviction that under the political order of the time our lives had no meaning. So when I wrote the criminal's story, I wrote my own story along with it. A simple crime tale became a philosophical meditation on the times! I subjected the main character, Sayyid Mahran, to all my confusion, my perplexities. I put him through the experience of looking for answers in the sheikh, in the "fallen woman," in the idealist who has betrayed his ideas for money and fame. The writer, you see, is not simply a journalist. He interweaves a story with his own doubts, questions and values. That is art.

INTERVIEWER

What about the role of religion in the story? Is faith in God the path to true happiness, as the sheikh suggests? Is Sufism the answer the criminal is looking for?

MAHFOUZ

The Sheikh rejects life as we know it. The criminal, on the other hand, is trying to solve his immediate problems. They are in two different worlds. I love Sufism as I love beautiful poetry, but it is not the answer. Sufism is like a mirage in the desert. It says to you, come and sit, relax and enjoy yourself for a while. I reject any path

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which rejects life, but I can't help loving Sufism because it sounds so beautiful . . . it gives relief in the midst of battle . . .

INTERVIEWER

I have several Egyptian friends who consult Sufi sheikhs regularly, looking for solutions . . .

MAHFOUZ

I wish them well. The real solution to their problems is in the National Bank.

INTERVIEWER

What of Nur, the woman in the story? And women such as Nefisa in *The Beginning and the End* and Zohra in *Miramar*? These characters, although "fallen," are clearly good-hearted, and appear to embody the only hope for the future.

MAHFOUZ

That is correct, although I intended Nefisa also to demonstrate the consequences of dishonorable conduct in a typical Egyptian family.

INTERVIEWER

Do you condone that type of punishment?

MAHFOUZ

I, with most Egyptians, feel that punishment on that level is too severe. On the other hand an Egyptian man who does not respond the way Nefisa's brother did cannot continue to live in this society. Whether or not he wants to, he is obliged to kill the dishonored girl. He cannot escape it. And it will be a long time before this tradition changes, although its force has lessened somewhat recently, especially in the cities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Abdul Gawad in the trilogy personifies the typical Egyptian male of the time. Is his type still common today?

MAHFOUZ

Oh yes. Particularly in Upper Egypt, in the countryside . . . though an Abdul Gawad today would probably be less extreme. Isn't there a shade of him in every man?

INTERVIEWER

Every *Egyptian* man, or every man?

MAHFOUZ

I can't speak for other countries but it is certainly true of Egyptian men.

INTERVIEWER

Things seem to be changing, though, wouldn't you say?

MAHFOUZ

Things are beginning to change. The position of the woman in the household has become much stronger, mainly due to education, although there are other factors.

INTERVIEWER

Who do you think should have the upper hand in the household? Who should make the decisions?

MAHFOUZ

A marriage is like a company with equal partners. No one rules. If there is a disagreement, the more intelligent of the two should override. But each family is different. Often the power depends on money; whoever makes the most money has the most strength. There are no fixed rules.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

In very conservative, traditional societies such as Egypt, don't women often have great power over men?

MAHFOUZ

Certainly, and recent history proves it. Men with considerable political or military power will fall into the hands of strong women who influence their decisions. These women rule from behind the curtain, from behind the veil.

INTERVIEWER

Why are the majority of your heroines women from the lower strata of society? Do you intend them to symbolize anything larger? Egypt, for example?

MAHFOUZ

No. By writing about lower-class women I simply intended to show that during the period in which these novels are set, women had no rights. If a woman couldn't find a good husband or divorce a bad one, she had no hope. Sometimes her only recourse was, unfortunately, illicit behavior. Until very recently, women have been a deprived lot with very few rights . . . even basic rights such as freedom of choice in marriage, divorce and education. Now that women are being educated, this situation is changing, because a women who is educated has a weapon. Some critics see Egypt symbolized by Hamida in *Midaq Alley*, but I never intended anything of the sort.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of such critics, who interpret your work in terms of symbols?

MAHFOUZ

When I first heard that Hamida symbolized Egypt, I was taken by surprise, even a little shocked. I suspected that the critics had simply decided to turn everything and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everyone into symbols. But then I began to see resemblances between aspects of Hamida's behavior and aspects of the political situation. And by the time I had finished reading the article, I realized that the critic was right—that while I was writing about Hamida I was also subconsciously writing about Egypt. I think such symbolic parallels probably always come from the subconscious. Although I may not intend a story to convey a certain meaning which a reader sees in it, that meaning may nevertheless be a legitimate part of the story. A writer writes both consciously and subconsciously.

INTERVIEWER

What is the subject closest to your heart? The subject you most love to write about?

MAHFOUZ

Freedom. Freedom from colonization, freedom from the absolute rule of a king, and basic human freedom in the context of society and the family. These types of freedom follow from one to the other. In the trilogy, for example, after the revolution brought about political freedom, Abdul Gawad's family demanded more freedom from *him*.

INTERVIEWER

What is the most difficult situation you have had to face in your life?

MAHFOUZ

Most certainly it was the decision to dedicate myself to writing, thereby accepting the lowest standard of living for myself and my family. It was especially difficult since the prospect of money was dangled before me. . . . Around 1947 I was given the chance to work as a scriptwriter with the best in the field. I began working with Salah Abu Seif, [an Egyptian film director] but I gave it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up. I refused to continue. I didn't work with him again until after the war when everything became expensive. Before that, I wouldn't think of it. And my family accepted these sacrifices.

INTERVIEWER

Many prominent writers, especially in the West, are known for their decadent private lives—their excessive drinking, drug use, unusual sexual habits, suicidal tendencies . . . but you appear to be perfect!

MAHFOUZ

Well. . . .

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps that is your greatest flaw?

MAHFOUZ

It is certainly a defect. But you are judging me in my dotage. In my younger days I did all those things. I drank, I pursued the gentler sex, and so forth.

INTERVIEWER

Are you optimistic about the future of the Middle East, particularly in view of the Gulf War and continued violence?

MAHFOUZ

At my age it is unseemly to be pessimistic. When you are young you can declare that there is no hope for mankind, but when you are older you learn to avoid encouraging people to hate the world.

INTERVIEWER

But what about a conception of the hero? Heroes don't seem to exist in your stories, nor indeed in the stories of any contemporary Egyptian writer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAHFOUZ

It's true that there are no heroes in most of my stories—only characters. Why? Because I look at our society with a critical eye and find nothing extraordinary in the people I see. The generation before mine, influenced by the 1919 uprisings, saw heroic behavior—the worker able to overcome unusual obstacles, that kind of hero. Other writers—Tawfiq al-Hakim, Muhammed Husayn Haykal, Ibrahim Abd al-Quadir al-Mazini—write about heroic types. But on the whole, our generation is very apathetic and a hero is a rare thing; you can't put a hero in a novel unless it is a work of fantasy.

INTERVIEWER

How would you describe a hero?

MAHFOUZ

There are many heroes in ancient Arabic literature, all of them horsemen, knights. But a hero today would for me be one who adheres to a certain set of principles and stands by them in the face of opposition. He fights corruption, is not an opportunist and has a strong moral foundation.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider yourself a hero?

MAHFOUZ

Me?

INTERVIEWER

Aren't you a model, for your children and your public, of one who stands by his principles in the face of adversity?

MAHFOUZ

Yes, certainly. But I don't think of myself as a hero.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

How, then, would you describe yourself?

MAHFOUZ

Someone who loves literature. Someone who believes in and is sincere about his work. Someone who loves his work more than money or fame. Of course, if money and fame come, they are welcome! But they have never been my goal. Why? Because I love writing more than anything else. It may be unhealthy, but I feel that without literature my life would have no meaning. I might have good friends, travel, luxuries, but without literature my life would be miserable. It's a strange thing, but not really, because most writers are the same way. This is not to say I have done nothing but write in my life. I am married, I have children. Then, since 1935 I have had a sensitivity in my eyes which prevents me from reading or writing during the summer, so this has imposed a balance on my life—a balance sent down by God! Each year I must live for three months as a man who is not a writer. Those three months I meet my friends and stay out until morning.

And I haven't lived?

—Charlotte El Shabrawy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Musica Reservata

Then I reached the field and I thought
this is not a joke not a book
but a poem about something—but what?
Poems are such odd little jiggers.
This one scratches himself, gets up, then goes off to pee
in a corner of the room. Later looking quite
stylish in white jodhpurs against the winter
snow, and in his reluctance to talk to the utterly
discursive: "I will belove less than feared . . ."

He trotted up, he trotted down, he trotted all around the tow
Were his relatives jealous of him?
Still the tock-tock machinery lies half-embedded in sand.
Someone comes to the window, the wave is a gesture
  proving nothing,
and that nothing has receded. One gets caught
in servants like these and must lose the green leaves,
one by one, as an orchard is pilfered, and then, with luck,
nuggets do shine, the baited trap slides open.
We are here with our welfare intact.

Oh but another time, on the resistant edge of night
one thinks of the pranks things are.
What led the road that sped underfoot
to oases of disaster, or at least the unknown?
We are born, buried for a while, then spring up just as
everything is closing. Our desires are extremely simple:
a glass of purple milk, for example, or a dream
of being in a restaurant. Waiters encourage us, and
  squirrels.
There's no telling how much of us will get used.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My friend devises the cabbage horoscope
that points daily to sufficiency. He and all those others
go home.
The walls of this room are like Mykonos, and sure
enough,
green plumes toss in the breeze outside
that underscores the stillness of this place
we never quite have, or want. Yet it's wonderful, this
being; to point to a tree and say don't I know you
from somewhere?
Sure, now I remember, it was in some landscape
somewhere,
and we can all take off our hats.

At night when it's too cold
what does the rodent say to the glass shard?
What are any of us doing up? Oh but there's
a party, but it too was a dream. A group of boys
was singing my poetry, the music was an anonymous
fifteenth-century Burgundian anthem, it went
something like this:

"This is not what you should hear,
but we are awake, and days
with donkey ears and packs negotiate
the narrow canyon trail that is
as white and silent as a dream,
that is, something *you* dreamed.
And resources slip away, or are pinned
under a ladder too heavy to lift.
Which is why you are here, but the mnemonics
of the ride are stirring."

That, at least, is my hope.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Youth's Magic Horn

I

The gray person disputes the other's clotheshorse stature
just send us some water maybe
herding him onto the escalator for a last roll
and bitter, bitter is its taste

We don't pay contributors
just send us some water maybe
We'll talk about the new flatness
and bitter, bitter is its taste

I'll probably be sleeping with you sometime between now and next week
just send us some water maybe
I haven't made a threat that the army hasn't carried out
and bitter, bitter is its taste

Meaningless an April day hungers for its model a drawstring
just send us some water maybe
Billboards empty of change rattle along beside
and bitter, bitter is its taste

Somewhere between here and the Pacific the time got screwed up
just send us some water maybe
but my spelling, as always, is excruciatingly correct
and bitter, bitter is its taste

and I welcome intrusions like the sun
just send us some water maybe
and all around us aquifers are depleted, the heat soars,
and bitter, bitter is its taste.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

First in dreams I questioned the casing of the gears
the enigma presented
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
The twa corbies belched and were gone, song veiled
sky that day
I have to stop in one mile

The century twitched and spewed gnomes from its
folds
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
The mule-gray pilgrim was seen departing
I have to stop in one mile

I never knew the name for this brand of contumely
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
Believe me I wanted to play the shores are still
beautiful
I have to stop in one mile

Here shall we sup and infest sleep for the night
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
Morning will surprise us with winds like variable
coins
I have to stop in one mile

You're the truth in my cup, violet in the edge of
memory
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
retrieve me at my dying moment so shall our hearts
decay
I have to stop in one mile

Remember the stone that sits beside you—
You're a pain in the ass my beloved
Sometimes they come for you and forget
I have to stop in one mile

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Nicholas Samaras

The Vocabulary We Could Not Use

I could not speak the name of the place,
the stone building that gave
more silence to the field.

Led into a room of wooden houses, I was made
to choose. Venetian bronze. Permaseal plaque.
Let this shelter last.

In a velvet room, a suit
used offensive phrases.
These words are not for us. They are useless.

In a basement chamber, they gave
a vial of burgundy, some white cloth
heavy in my clutch.

Left to view, wash, and dress him alone.
It is not his body.
It is him.

The blank face upstairs pushed a text of barbed wire,
white paper to sign and our names
were the only flowering we could recognise.

I could not bring myself to read the morning's print.
The quiet section, the photograph and headline hurt.
The lettering, ugly with fact.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A sound from my throat made
arrangements. An airline voice asked,
"Will you be traveling alone?"

We went to the orchard of stones, and stood politely.
Everyone there gazed elsewhere. I looked
down to see blurred, black clothing on my body.

Something moved in the air, above our heads.
The trees swayed with it. I felt it on my cheeks.
A beautifully gray hairy-faced man moved his mouth,
and I heard nothing.

Someone put an object in my hands.
Cut stem. Cupped blossom. Thorn.
My finger bled with the residue of petal and smell.

What has this to do with us?
I dwell on this plot until darkness gathers
and the ground cools in slumber.

Stand. The blue wind goes sobbing.
It is inconsolable.
You cannot console it.

What you embrace is the emptiness and the
vocabulary
you cannot use, the silence,
the air paternal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fasting

First Day

I dream
of magazine covers
and clothes from my seventeenth summer,
of black monks smiling
placidly, serenely,
moving lightly through deep gardens,
of God opening slowly
like saffron-lit petals—
and myself thinking, yes,
of course.

Second Day

Nothing moves.
There is an amazing silence.
I become large and bored with sitting here.
I roam the house, watch glutted birds
peg-leg on the lawn, peck after
each other for crumbs.

Third Day

The walls breathe and tremble
with a stout wind from rich evergreens.
When I try to be calm,
every part of my skin itches.
My stomach quarrels noisily,
  its juices working against itself.
I force myself to sit
very still, feel my own breathing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fourth Day

My blood thins.
I sense a pouring out of myself
and become fluid.
Thoughts grow spare
yet flash through me
like bright heat-lightning
on a dry, summer day.
Everything I think of is profound.

I move to the bathroom, wait
for nothing.
I think of the air as treacle,
think of the sun as a yolk,
taste salt on the ridges of my knuckles,
think of death and find it amusing;
then guide my thoughts back to nothing,
recite wordlessly why this is necessary.
I have merely wanted to unclutter
myself. If only once.
I sleep lightly and wake
when the air speaks to me.

Fifth Day

The way light
changes and colours,
dapples on the floor, is godly.
Evenings lengthen.
Bleached hours
approach from the window,
drape over me like arms of a friend.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Somehow, I can smell the minutest things:
the pine needles down in the yard,
the tinny scent of the screen-window,
the vapor of my own fear melting.
My hands shake slightly, seem
to grow translucent.
I think I can almost
see through
them—the reddish
skin, the steady flush pumping
in blue veins.
They seem to glow from within,
knowing some secret.

Sixth Day

My stomach has shrunk to silence.
My mind stills.
Time does not exist.
It is a theory.
I look out on a bolt of sky
and think of Byzantine eras, slip off
my watch, the ring from my finger.
The telephone opens and I answer it.

Seventh Day

I remember everything clearly.
Schoolboy-prefects from the upper forms
who used to beat me up
appear exactly
as they were:
their bruised hands,
the grass stains on their knees
and I forgive them.
I play the moted shafts and beams
through my fingers,
follicles of light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eighth Day

Everywhere around me now float photos
of those I've loved.
Demons hover over me,
glaring under reddened eyelids.
My heart beats firmly in its
monastery of bone.

I understand the desert.
I understand
the dull film on mirrors,
why hermits are viewed
as either saintly or mad.
I understand the paradox of quiet,
the way ascetics historically
go to darkness
to find light.

Ninth Day

Downstairs, the heavy door opens.
Voices rise
thickly,
touch me like a physical force.
The air is tangy
with strains of music
as I lift my arms slowly.
There is no need for more.
I am fatted on the rind
of shadows, harvested light
and what light enables.
I allow myself to be led to the table.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joy Dworkin

Gannet

First the choughs
in a band of three:
red beaks lit
against sky, black wings
slow over the heath.

Naked shins etched
by stiff gorse
prickles, we reach
the island's highest
point. A terrified

hare thumps retreat.
Two lesser black-backed
gulls surf the air, teeter
as the invisible wave
turns. Limestone

juts through gorse
(shrunk to a sponge
carpet). Wind tempts
our legs to the cliff,
hugs our knees

and takes wing: huge
dark primaries pull
like the grand east-west
stretch of the tight-rope
walker's hands. This

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bird must be what
the wind (that ecstatic
ghost) urged us
to see: a moment of
hunger: the plunge

astounds the ocean where it hits,
water stands up white, a frozen
palisade, then crumbles
into its element.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Donald Revell

In Company

I

A long silk
is pulled quickly
over my upturned palms
in pitch darkness. In

the horror of not being in a hurry, kneeling before a framed numeral or tide rip or a thought of bridges, confession ends. Jokes cover it like a rash, a

marlin gasping.
Music broke the
surface of my youth.
Maimed ship or maimed

voyage? When I was younger, I did not need my eyes.
The
world, audible in every corner, in each filter, gasped
and, glistening with seawater, made always its pavane.

By order of questions,
the toolmaking eye grows
lame. The exigency of
the gaze grows lame,

and a leaf is mistaken for floodlights. I walk beside the highway. Even so little greenery is enough, breezy enough to carry the whole tune, wholeness including some
mountains.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only silence
wrestles time.
Abandoned ones
stare with authority

and eat the Janus that once surrounded them. I
remember how
Elizabeth died very soon after. And then Karl. A
vacant ardor,
merely precarious. Their dateless echo fades, and then
it swells

in music. They
drown and vanish.
They queue up, gorged
with seawater, and vanish.

The long silk moves faster and faster, cutting a channel in
my
palms. The shrill perfection of our origins breaks the
surface.
The fish gasp. The groves untune. Hurry vigilance, hurry.

II

By itself, an entire
album to itself, the
snapshot of a radio
swallows fire.

The alternative is fidelity. On Saturdays, I would be
taken along
to the hat shop. Between two mirrors, each one
absolutely truthful,
my mother repeated, until her total absence, a horizon
of nets and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

false flowers.
The wounds are
insects and then
starlings, the sugar-

side of the dead. All groves whisper to the temple's
benign un-
reality. I walked with you. I wore a leather coat, and I
was led
away. Through gardens. The point of contact, the dirt
of one letter

swallows fire.
I call it Progress.
I aim a petal of loss
instead of wheels.

We made nothing better than memory out of so much
terror. In
Italy, American bombers resurrected the buried
Temple of Fortune,
sheering off the rockface on a mistaken raid.
Absolutely faithful,

the decisive violences
prove it to me: what is
discovered is only
spared, not sanctified.

And so my mother stood and preened, a hundredfold
with her back
turned in every direction. Her absence returned from
its far country,
and into the street the percussion of the nets, the
cornets of false

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flowers poured.
No fires at all
is Progress. I
am dirt there.

A few short years afterwards, there came a superb
summer. The fine
fleet had left its harbor during the night, never to
return. Gardens
surfaced out of a long sleep to combat the monsters.
None was spared.

III

The father disappears into another rite.

These aggressions:
the orgasm willfully delayed,
the tulip glass left standing in the roadway.
I always hear the scream of its location.

The father is a towering furniture,
a different nudity, a different grasp.

These aggressions:
Elizabeth and Karl,
Fire and the Temple of Fortune,
and none was spared the posthumous flower
of a mother's hat.

The father cannot multiply his absence.
He rakes leaves and begins the burn.
Summer dies where his adolescent son
gorges on smoke and vanishes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These:
beginning to burn
erodes to the status
of metaphor; the act of
forgetting indistinguishable
from remembrance except for the
body count, mother the charnel house,
father the smoke that rises from its chimney.

Memory does not prove that something has been spared.
If I could walk or if I could breathe underwater, then
faithfulness would hurry to its aftermath, overtaking
Father above his pyre in winter sunlight, gasping.

If I could walk or if I could breathe underwater, then
summer dies where the adolescent son,
the tulip glass left standing in the roadway,
begins to burn.

A leaf is the shape of God
torn apart.
A father has no face after.

IV

Three only a little born, and then unborn. Subtract the rain
from injury and it is Saint, and it is a
through-passenger.
Dunes, dunces wear the names Elaborate, Film,
Basket, from
which hangs alchemy of judicial murder. Brothers, it
is im-
possible to pray to my own names. Unravelling
petitions, God
is scourges, a circle of fires around the new
observatory
making the stars impossible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three only a little born, then unborn, he pronounces
tender.
First came the breast of salt, and then the breast of pine.
Earthquakes moved inland. I notice black ants erupt
from the
ground to cover the walls moments before
catastrophe.

If I exist, it is because my older brothers died in infancy.
I bear their names, unburdened of my own.

I get a feeling of stabbing, here, over the convulsed
road.
Consolation turns mirrors to the wall, obscures angels
with
snapshots. By the fireplace, on a sofa in the hotel
lobby,
I drank cold wines. Across the avenue, soundless in an
apart-
ment window, two naked boys slammed and slammed
against one
another. They were in the custody of angels, teeth
bared from
now on.

I have an ugly girlfriend. The bus fills. There are many
con-
fessions, each a yellow circle of light until the foot of the
mountains, where Fortune ends. The dead are parents
forgiven
by the unborn. Will you still delay?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

Marsh birds change direction like a pack
of cards. There is no landscape except youth,
neither end nor voice, a summer not
a venom. Father took me to a field.
Trees grew out of the stone's step-book.
And when my father struck, it was an eagle
I could not see behind my neck
but smelled its blood in my close hair.

One Sarah to John Wesley: "I know no sinners
but one, and the Devil is the other."
Too numerous too brief concord disfigured
the coat of river where I went down
to the river, disfigured the circumstances
of age in an old coat until he called
out to circumstances, to one Sarah.

The long silk neither ends nor is abolished.
Memory obeys a treble. Perfect
obedience allows me to forget
at last and to begin a real life,
music crowned by one dust and one accident.
No landscape except youth, no synagogue
except as webs shaken, and cathedrals
unborn after my brothers died monsters.

This morning, a pamphlet of cypresses
lay open on the table, covered with numbers.
I fell in love with two sides of a house,
happy for the wind's share, happy
to see the vigilance of a straight line
uproot the cypresses and drown the numbers.
It made a beautiful window in each side.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brooks Haxton

Horologe

à tout ce qui fuit
—Charles Baudelaire

The clock inside the mantid
egg under the drifted
snow,
the sap clock in the February tree,
Von Karajan's internal metronome
with different signatures exact in either hand,
the gearbox of the Amazon, the oceanic cogs,

a bull's neck wounded, outpour of galactic noise,
gut strung on tortoise shell, on
boxwood, or gold wire on
gold,
silver eels in estuaries swimming down
past grizzled salmon bound upstream,
terns, orcas, caribou in shrunken herds,

state ministers who synch their talks
into the general's scheme, stock brokers taking note
and families at the border with no plan,
the unhoused axle of the planet wobbling
one half turn among the stars
in thirteen thousand years,

hatched leatherbacks not making for the heavens
into the surf but pulling onto the highway
with front flippers bloody toward new lights in town,
clock stopped on the mantle, pockmarks
of storm systems on the sun,
ticking from inside a flame-rapt log

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ian Ganassi

Civilization and its Discontents

The best way to eliminate guilt
Is to have nothing to feel guilty about.
Thus spake my surrogate father
After smashing my surrogate brother's face
Into a bowl of surrogate cereal
For not sitting the right way.

Your worst sin should be owning an air conditioner.
Your worst crime should be ripping the tags off
unsold mattresses.
Predictable but effective.

He was confused.
He said "This is your life"
When what he really meant was
"This is my life."
And these are her friends?
And this is what she admires?
A prostitute with a college education.
But keep it a secret.

Your worst sin should be owning two air
conditioners.
Your worst crime should be stealing red herrings
From the Czechoslovakian fish huckster
("He's Abie the fish man, he's Abie the fish man.")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My father was full of guilt
About not living up to some great woman's
Expectations.
I am too. He always told us to recycle,
To watch the clouds, the moon.
He won at chess. It was the game he won.
His car always broke down half way.
He felt terribly guilty about all of this.

Your worst sin should be smoking three packs a day.
Your worst crime should be crossing against the light.
As if the light cared.

As my fellow madwoman
Rasped at me in the hospital
"You beautiful thing."
Now I know why they fought over me
Like so many rabid Pithecanthropi.

Your worst sin should be working fewer hours than
you're paid for.
Your worst crime should be sneaking a cigarette
In the nonsmoking section.

Your worst sin should be steak tartar
As if the chopped chuck cared.
Your worst crime should be stealing hubcaps
And selling them as authentic musical instruments
from paradise.

As my fellow madwoman said
"I know karate and you don't"
As she kicked her way off a lounge chair
Onto the floor
Doped up on Thorazine.
So I picked her up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charlie Smith

The Plum-Shaped Heart

Yes, I want someone to know me well,
better than the foreman at Ford Electra
knows the chips
and filaments, knows the sad story
of the good and worthless man he had to let go
yesterday;

I want someone to know
how unable I am to love
what I set my heart on loving,

and how it is like a walk in an orchard in November:
the last tiny corroded apples wreathed around the
trees,
a few still in place up there
if you are looking on your way through leaves
into the sky,
and how when the woodchucks
appear at the mossy openings
they will look hard at you before whirling away,
as if they knew you from somewhere,
from something they don't want to go on with

—it's that crazy sometimes,
up here in the seedy room I've sunk back into
as if on a dare;
what is it about
but taking the muddy heart in your hands
and holding it,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

holding it no matter what,

what is it about but saying yes as you tell the story
of the snapping turtle's plum-shaped heart
you kept in a glass of salty water
that ten days later when grandmother made you
    throw it out
was still beating?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Fried

The Wild Irises

Dying of thirst,
I long to share the fate of the wild irises
Each raindrop must seem to whom the size of a
boulder
Flung down to devastate them with what they need.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arcady
or A Night Out

Henry Green

This previously unpublished text was sent to Nevill Coghill in 1925 while Green was in France finishing his novel Blindness.

We were in the car, swinging through the traffic, & the air inside drooped with folded wings at the shut windows & the scent she used, sweeping through the streets that swirled in eddies of changing light, talking nervously she & I of what was coming. Then down into the dirty brick of Swallow Road, & the chauffeur of her proud car incredulous at first, then anxious for her safety, yet not so anxious as she was. Up the stairs, & in through the glass door, & her involuntary cry of 'Henry,' for she was nervous while the chauffeur thought dark things of me below, & my voice reassuring her. At our table, groping through the names of Spanish dishes, wrestling with the faulty English of our waiter. She saw someone she did not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wish to see, & was that because my reputation had outdistanced me? Then our modest half bottle of some Spanish wine & her account of how she took Vingarnis [sic] as a tonic, & of how her daily dose inebriated her, of my fears that our waiter & myself should have to carry her downstairs to the proud car & the chauffeur's face when he saw what had been done; of my trip to Africa to give Society leisure to forget.

Perhaps we were substitutes for each other, so that her young man was not myself but someone else who in her imagination was toying with the Spanish omelette in my place, while I began to know that it was not her at any rate whom I would have sitting opposite me, but someone else perhaps.

The bill paid, & in the car again with no mishap, thrusting on to the theatre. And my fears, for it was a Music Hall at her request, & the jokes there might prove difficult to face. The programme seller with a face of enamelled paint, a man & a woman on the stage singing of love in a back garden under a flowering tree. Hysterical laughter when the curtain came down to cover the emptiness that was left. She saw more people she knew, & they looked anxiously at me. Then a scene with a bed upon the stage with the tumult of my fears storming within me. More laughter when the curtain fell. Next the chorus dancing with gnarled legs waving & boneless arms in harsh mauve and carmine lights. And so on to the end.

Then sentiment in a taxi, for the chauffeur had gone outraged to bed with his proud car, how we never met, how this must be repeated, what an adventure it was, what fun it had been.

And adventure it was, for we had deputized for each other's dream.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

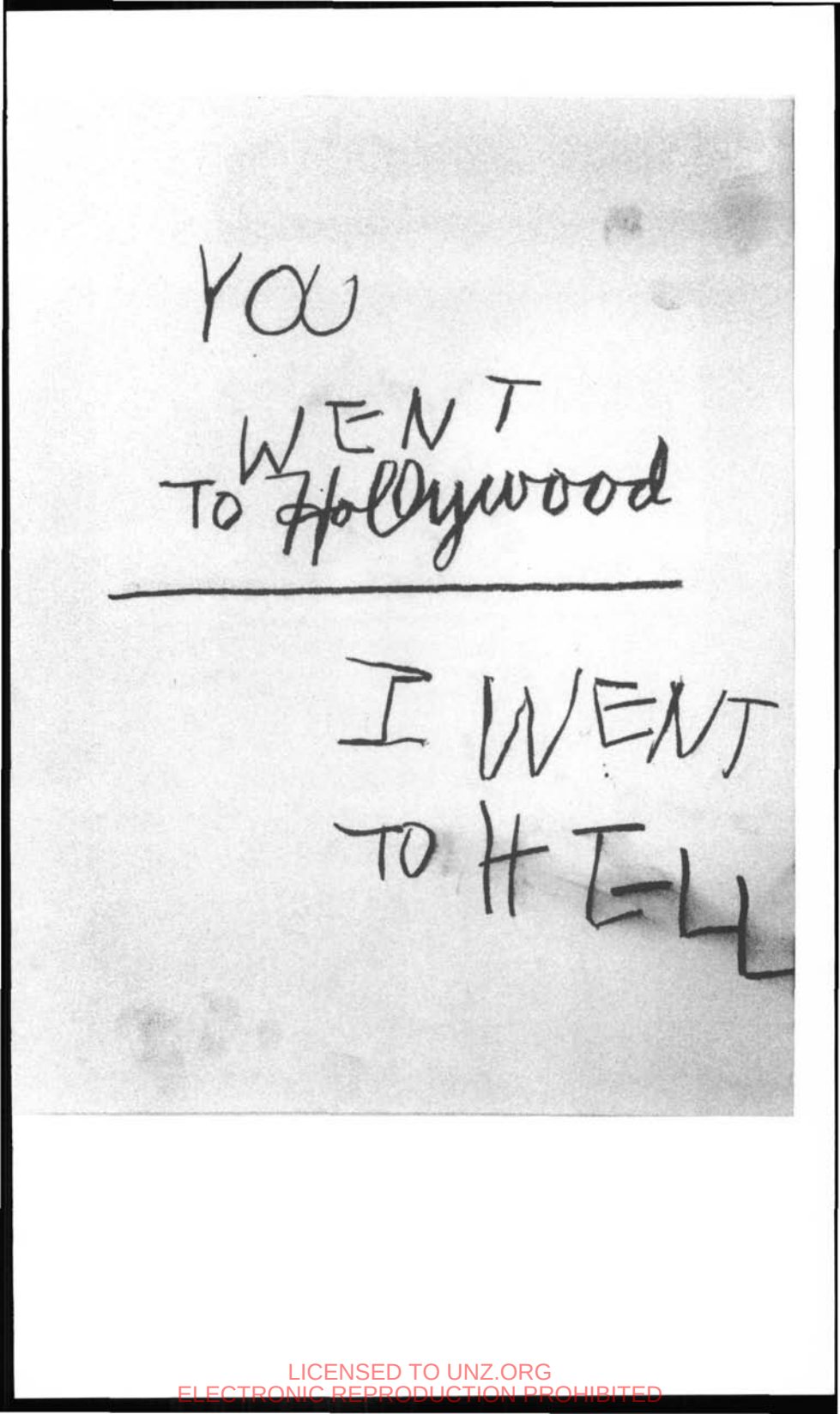
Portfolio

You Went to Hollywood

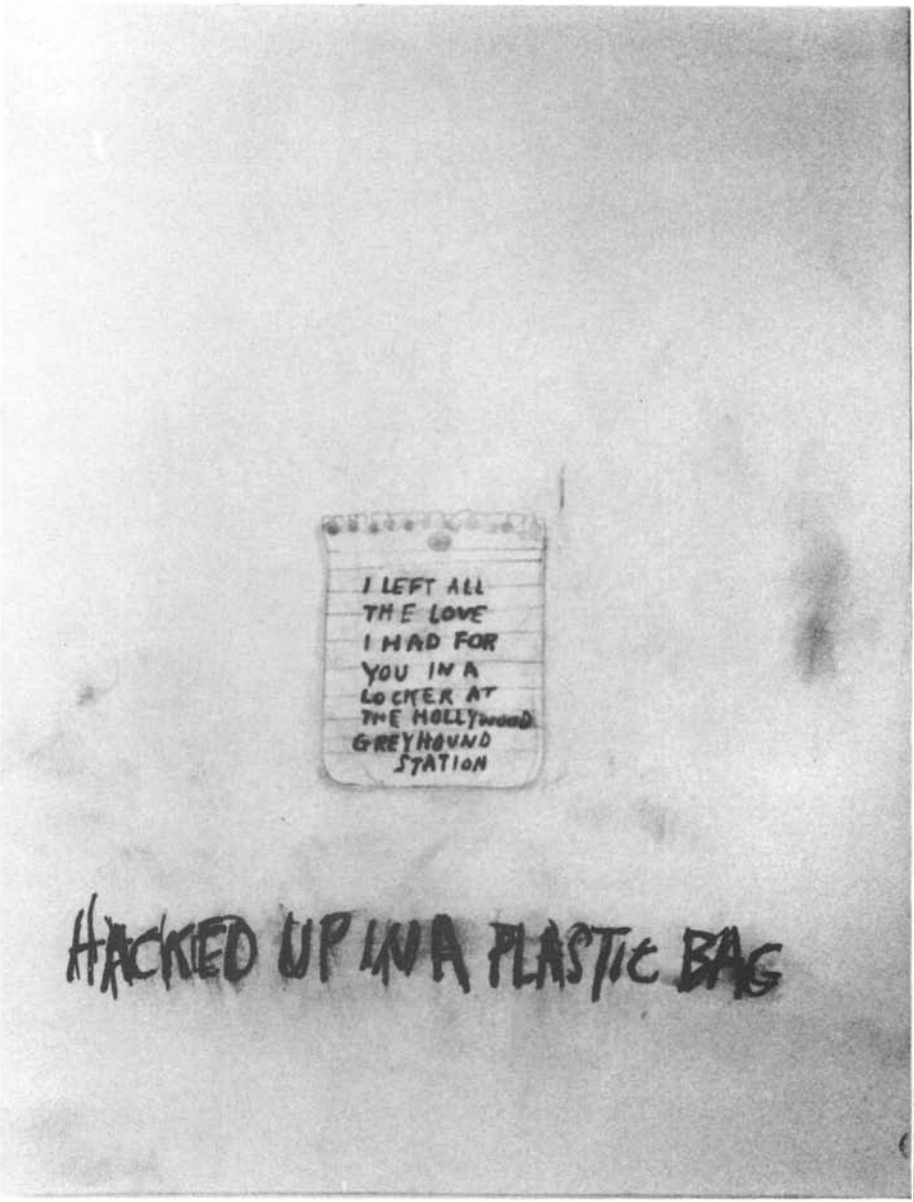
Jack Pierson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

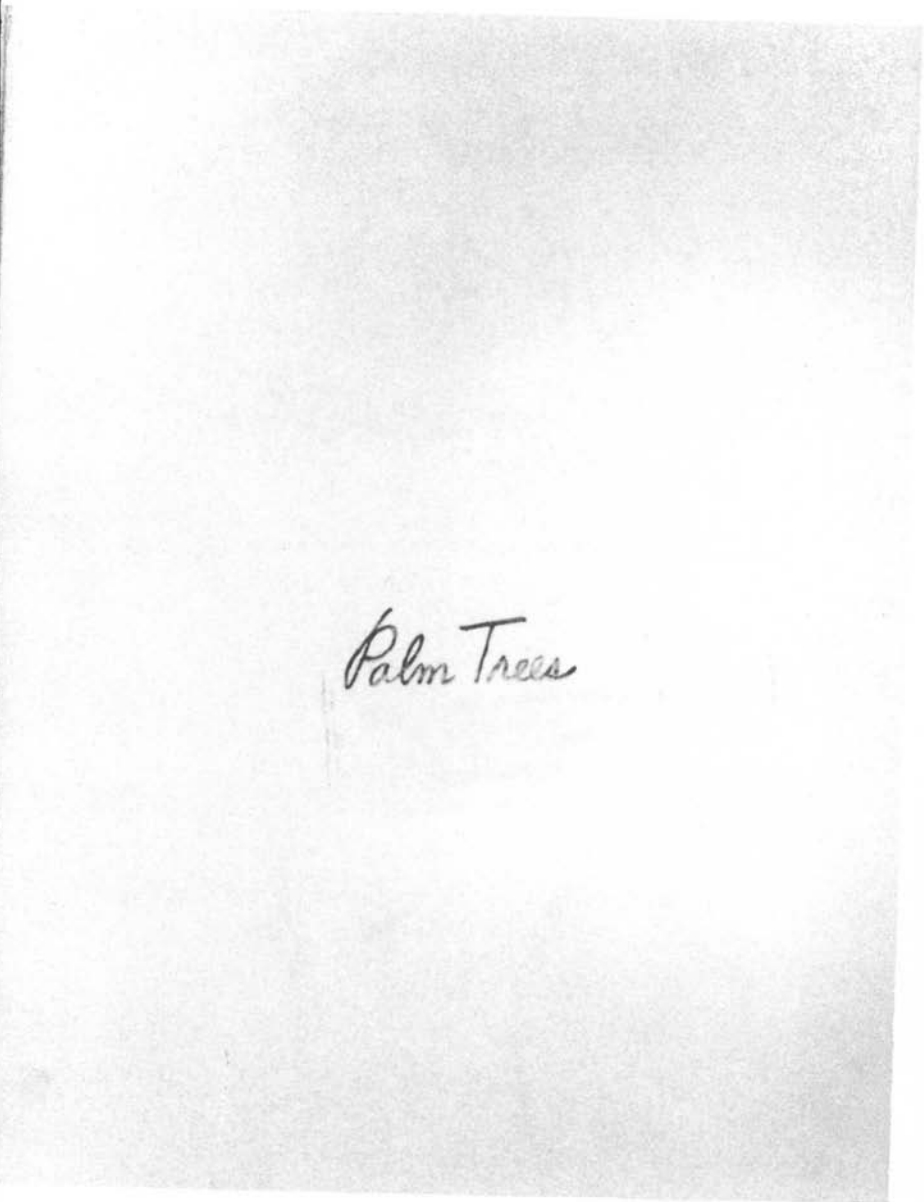
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



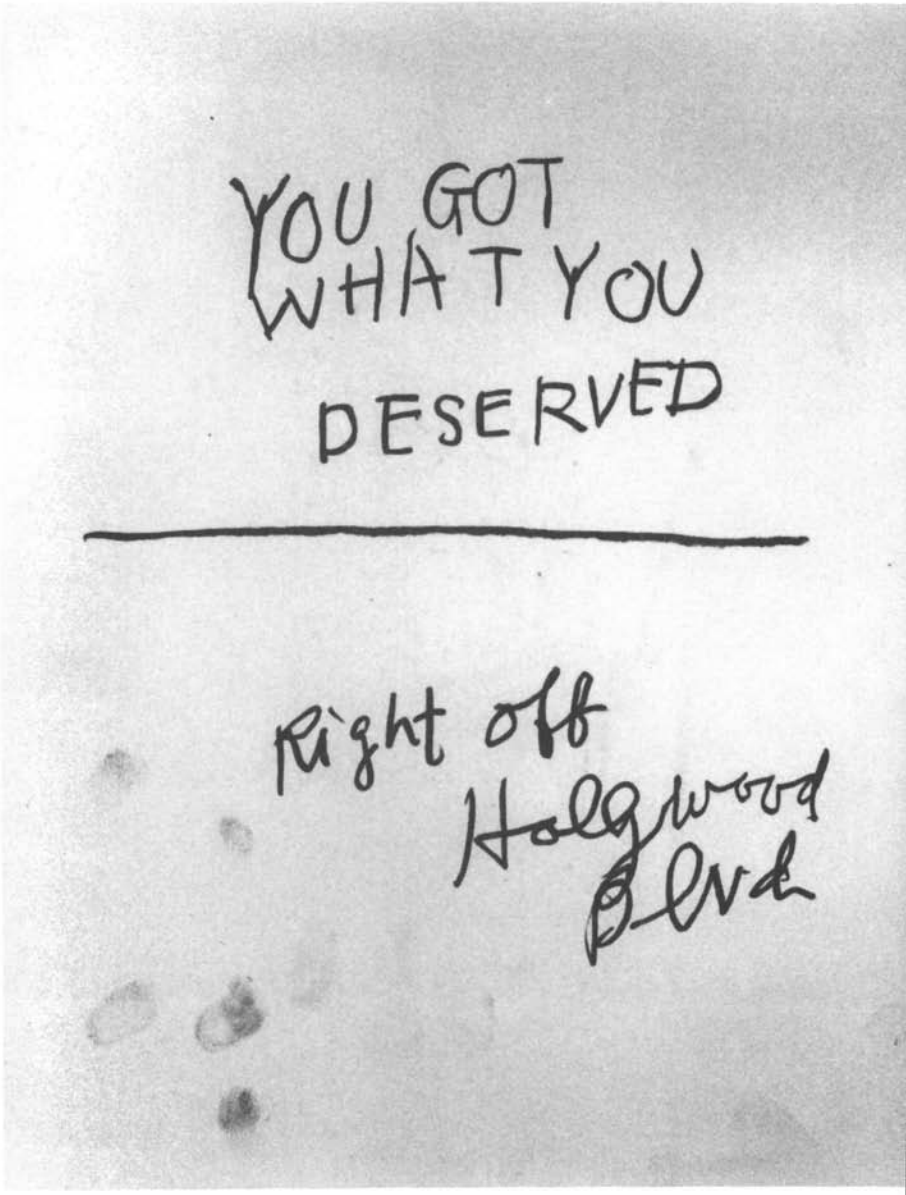
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



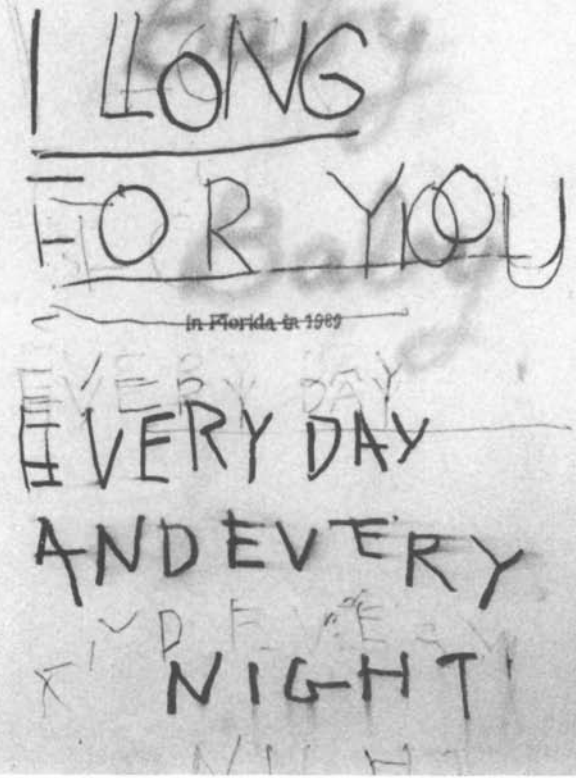
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



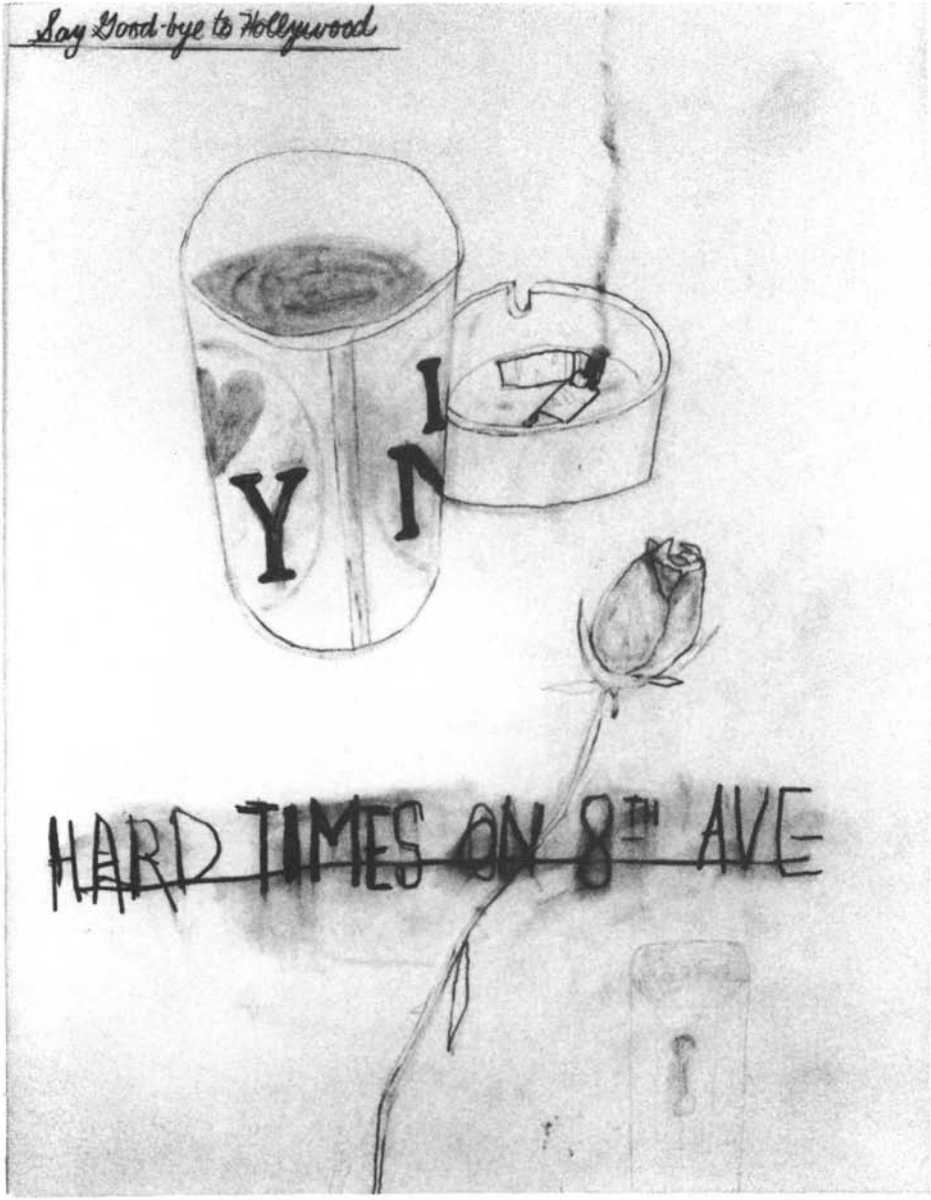
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as if he belonged. No one

all the years he cried out for attention,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A: A $50 JOHN

[redacted]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dante Alighieri

Inferno: Canto XXVIII

Who could find words, even in free-running prose,
To describe the wounds I saw, in all their horror—
Telling it over as many times as you choose,

It's certain no human tongue could take the measure
Of those enormities. Our speech and mind,
Straining to comprehend them, flail, and falter.

If all the Apulians who long ago mourned
Their lives cut off by Trojans could live once more,
Assembled to grieve again with the thousands
stained

By their own blood in the long Carthaginian war—
The rings pillaged from their corpses poured by the
bushel,
As Livy writes, who has never been known to err—

Together with those who took mortal blows in battle
With Robert Guiscard, and the others whose bones
are heaped
At Ceperano, killed in the Puglian betrayal,

And the soldiers massacred in the stratagem shaped
By old Alardo, who conquered without a weapon
Near Tagliacozzo when their army was trapped,

And some were showing wounds still hot and open,
Others the gashes where severed limbs had been,—
It would be nothing to equal the mutilation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I saw in that Ninth Chasm. No barrel staved-in
With a missing end-piece ever gaped open as wide
As the man I saw now, split open from his chin

Down to the farting-place, and from the splayed
Trunk the spilled entrails dangled between his thighs.
I saw his organs, and the sack that turns the bread

We swallow into shit. Seeing my helpless eyes
Fastened upon him, he pulled open his chest
With both hands, saying, "Look how Maömetto claws

And mangles himself, torn open down from the breast!
Look how I tear myself! And my follower goes
Weeping before me—like me, a schismatic, and cleft:

Split open upward from the chin along his face
Up to the forelock. And all you see here, when alive,
Taught schism, and so they all are cleavered like this.

A devil is waiting with a sword back there, to carve
Each of us open afresh each time we've gone
Our circuit around this road, where while we grieve

Our wounds close up before we pass him again—
But who are you that stand here, perhaps to delay
Torments pronounced on your own false words to men?

"Neither has death yet reached him, nor does he stay
For punishment of guilt," my master replied,
"But for experience. And for that purpose I,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who am dead, lead him through Hell as rightful guide,
From circle to circle. Of this, you can be as sure
As that I stand and speak to you, here at his side."

A throng of more than a hundred were gathered there,
Who at hearing my master's words had halted, and
came
Along the trench toward me in order to stare,

Forgetting their torment in wonder for a time.
"Tell Fra Dolcino, you who may see the sun,
If he'd like not to follow too soon, to the same

Punishment here, he should scurry to store up grain
Against a winter siege and the snows' duress,
Or the Novarese will easily bring him down"—

After he had lifted his foot to resume the pace,
Maömetto spoke these words, and having spoken
He stepped away again on his painful course.

Another there, whose face was cruelly broken,
The throat pierced through, the nose cut off at the
brow,
With only one ear, had stopped and gazed at me,
stricken

With recognition as well as wonder. "Ah, you,"
His bleeding throat spoke, "You here, yet not
eternally
Doomed here by guilt—unless I'm deceived, I
knew

Your face when I still walked above, in Italy.—
If you return to that sweet plain I knew well,
The one that rises from Marcabò towards Vercelli,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Remember Pier da Medicina. And you may tell
Sir Guido and Angiolello, two gentlemen
From Fano, that if we have foresight here in Hell

They will be thrown from their vessel, and will drown
Near La Cattolica by a tyrant's treachery.
From Cyprus to Majorca, never has Neptune

Witnessed such evil in all the history
Of pirates and Argolic raiders. Their betrayer,
Who sees from one eye only (he holds a city

Found bitter by another who's with me here)
Will lure them sailing there for truce-talks, and then,
When he has dealt with them, they'll need no
prayer

For safe winds near Focara—not ever again."
Then I to him, "If you'd have me be the bearer
Of news from you to those above, explain—

What man do you mean—who found a city bitter?"
Then he grasped one who stood near him by the jaw,
And opened the mouth, saying "This one is the
creature,

And he does not speak, who once, in exile, knew
Words to persuade great Caesar at the Rubicon
That hesitation was risky, a treacherous flaw,

And: 'Once he's prepared, delaying injures a man.' "
I felt dull horror at how Curio's tongue was cut
To a stub in his throat, whose speech had been so
keen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then one with both hands lopped off came forward to
shout,
Raising the stumps so his cheeks were spattered by
blood,
"And remember Mosca Lamberti!—I, too, gave out

Slogans persuading to bloodshed, it was I who said
'What's done is done with': words that brought
such pain
To the Tuscan people." Then, when he heard me
add,

"—and death to your family tree," utterly undone
By sorrow piled on sorrow, the man fell still,
And walked off like one whom grief had made
insane.

I stayed to see more, one sight so incredible
As I should fear to describe, except that conscience,
Being pure in this, encourages me to tell:

I saw—and writing it now, my brain still envisions—
A headless trunk that walked, in sad promenade
Shuffling the dolorous track with its companions,

And the trunk was carrying the severed head,
Gripping it by the hair like a lantern, letting it swing,
And the head looked up at us: "Oh me!" it cried.

He was himself and his lamp as he strode along,
Two in one, and one in two—and how it can be,
Only He knows, who created every thing.

Reaching the bridge, the trunk held the head up high
So we could hear his words, which were, "Look well,
You who come breathing to view the dead, and say

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If there is a punishment harder than mine in Hell.
Carry the word, and know me: Bertran de Born,
Who made the father and the son rebel

The one against the other, by the evil turn
I did the young king, counseling him to ill.
David and Absalom had nothing worse to learn

From the wickedness contrived by Achitophel.
Because I parted their union, I carry my brain
Parted from this, its pitiful stem: Mark well

This retribution that you see is mine."

—translated from the Italian
by Robert Pinsky

NOTE: Apparently, Dante and his contemporaries believed that Mohammed was a renegade cardinal. This divergence from historical truth amounts to the invention of an imaginary character, which the translator here indicates by retaining the Italian "Maömetto." The meaning of Dante's "Maömetto" cannot be adequately signified by modern English's Mohammed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arthur Sze

Archipelago

1

I walk along the length of a stone-and-gravel garden
and feel without looking how the fifteen stones
appear and disappear. I had not expected the space
to be defined by a wall made of clay boiled in oil
nor to see above a series of green cryptomeria
pungent in spring. I stop and feel an April snow
begin to fall on the stones and raked gravel and see
how distance turns into abstraction desire and
ordinary
things: from the air, corn and soybean fields are
a series of horizontal and vertical stripes of pure
color:
viridian, yellow ocher, raw sienna, sap green. I
remember in Istanbul at the entrance to the Blue
Mosque
two parallel, extended lines of shoes humming at
the threshold of paradise. Up close, it's hard to know
if the rattle of milk bottles will become a topaz,
or a moment of throttled anger tripe that is
chewed and chewed. In the distance, I feel drumming
and chanting and see a line of Pueblo women dancing
with black-on-black jars on their heads; they lift
the jars high then start to throw them to the ground.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2

Rope at ankle level,
a walkway sprinkled with water
under red and orange maples along a white-plastered
wall;

moss covering the irregular ground
under propped-up weeping cherry trees;

in a corral
a woman is about to whisper and pat the roan's neck;

an amber chasm inside a cello;

in a business conversation,
the silences are eel farms passed on a bullet train;

a silence in the shape of a rake;

a sheet of ice floating along a dock;
the texture of icy-black basil leaves at sunrise;

a Shaggy Mane pushing up through asphalt;

a woman wearing a multicolored dress of silk-screened
naked women
about to peel an egg;

three stones leading into a pond.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3

Desire is to memory as an azalea is to a stone?
During the Cultural Revolution, the youngest brother
of the Peng family was executed against a wall
in Chengdu for being a suspected Guomindang agent.
Years earlier, the eldest brother was executed
at that wall for being a suspected communist.
This Chengdu effect has no end, but if you interiorize,
you feel a series of psychological tragedies
has the resonance of stone-and-gravel waterfalls.
A first frost sweetens the apples; I want them sweeter
but discover a second frost makes the cores mush;
so essential shapes are destroyed starting at the center.
A woman and man must ache from a series of
betrayals
before they can begin to bicker at the dinner table.
I water hyacinth bulbs planted in shallow pots
in the cool, dark bathroom, and, though it feels
odd to do so when walnuts are rotting on the ground,
a thought of spring is inadvertent pleasure:
a policeman pushed a dancer against a car, said,
"Sure,"
when he insisted he had marigolds, not marijuana.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4

She puts jars in a pit, covers them with sawdust,
adds a layer of shards and covers them,
builds a fire, and, when the burn is intense,
smothers it with sheep dung. She will not know
for a few hours if the jars have turned completely
black and did not break cooling. For now,
no one sees or knows; I inhale smoke, see
vendors along the docks selling grilled
corn smelling of charcoal, the air at dusk
plangent with cries from minarets up on the hill—
the cries resembling the waves of starlings
that always precede the pulsing wing-beat Vs
of sandhill cranes. Oh, you can glow with anger,
but it leaves the soot of an oil burner
on the windows and walls. If anguish is an end
in itself, you walk into a landscape of
burned salt cedar along a river. I remember
seeing hungry passengers disembark at the docks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5

Men dressed in cottonwood leaves dance
in the curving motion of a green rattlesnake.
I feel I am walking along a sandstone trail
and stop in a field of shards: here is a teal zigzag
and there is a blood-red deer's breath arrow.
Women dancers offer melons to the six directions
then throw them to the ground. I feel a wave
rock through the crowd as the melons are smashed
open.
I know I have walked along a path lit
by candles inside open-mesh cast-iron carp.
I stop at a water basin, and as I bend to
ladle water, see, reflected, a sweet gum leaf.
As a cornmeal path becomes a path to the gods
then a cornmeal path again, I see the line
of women dancing with black-on-black jars on their
heads.
They raise the jars with macaw and lightning patterns
to the six directions then form a circle
and throw them down on the center-marking stones.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

6

"Go kiss a horse's ass."

"He hanged himself from the flagpole."

"I just do what I'm told."

She wanted him to hold her and say nothing.

"Depression is due to loss or guilt."

Who heard shrieks?
In the morning,
a mutilated body was found behind the adobe church.

He saw that "A or B" was not a choice since A and B had been predetermined.

"I hated that painting painting so I burned it."

Hair on the woodstove.

"I'm so glad."

After fallopian surgery, she touches her scar, combs her hair, puts on makeup.

The red phoenix tattoos on the arms of a locksmith.

"A man's character is his fate."

He had two cameras but was always pawning one to release the other.

They slept a Mediterranean sleep: sun, sand, water;
the bed had the soft motion of waves.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no!"

"Water is the koan of water."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

7

I look at fourteen stones submerged at varying depths
in a sea of gravel. I do not know under which stone
is a signature but guess that a pin-sized hourglass
space,
separating intention and effect, is a blind point
where anger may coalesce into a pearl. I may sit here
until the stones have a riparian shine and are buoyant
in September starlight, yet never live to see
how grief turns into the effortless stretch of a
fisherman
casting a fly onto a stream. When I slept on a float
house
I became accustomed to the rise and fall of the tide,
so that when I walked on the rain forest island
I was queasy. I wanted a still pellucid point
but realize the necessary and sufficient condition
is to feel the pin-sized space as a point of resistance,
as a smash that is a beginning wave of light.
The dancers reappear and enter the plaza in two lines.
Shifting feet in rhythm to the shifting drumming,
they approach the crowd under the yellow
cottonwood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8

Mating above the cattails, red dragonflies—

sipping litchi tea, eating fried scallion pancakes—

bamboo slivers under the fingernails—

playing Ping-Pong by candlelight in a greenhouse—

digging up and rotating soil in the flower beds—

pulling and pulling at her throat until it bleeds—

scraping the skin of the earth—

finding Shaggy Manes have deliquesced into black ink—

releasing endorphins in the brain—

archipelago:
an expanse of water with many scattered islands—

a python coiling around sixteen white oblong eggs—

waking in the dark to pungent hyacinths—

blooming the pure white curve of blooming—

dancers are throwing
licorice, sunflower seeds, pot scrubbers, aprons, plastic bowls.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

9

Plastic bowls, aprons, pot scrubbers, sunflower seeds, licorice—

the shadow of a hummingbird—

crab apple blossoms scattering in the street—

a silence in the shape of a chanterelle—

a turkey feather hanging from a branch of mountain ash—

the forms of lightning—

a yellow iris blooming near the house marker, 1932—

river stones marking the noon solstice—

black, *blak, blaec*—

following the thread
of recollection through a lifetime—

the passions becoming the chiming sounds of jade—

blue corn growing in a field of sand—

the *chug chug, ka ka* of a cactus wren—

a black and yellow butterfly closing then opening its wings—

egrets wading in shallow water at low tide.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Greg Miller

From the Museum

Rooting in brittle mortar—
gypsum plaster, sand, and water—
bougainvillea grew around the arches,
in walls, and through the fences of the town,
the one old woman in the town museum
opening a window in the spiral
staircase overlooking a river
and its alluvial leavings:
green, yellow-green, and brown rectangular
and polygonal plots along the river
beyond the town walls built, so the signs say,
by Charlemagne's son, where the Allies
bombed and flattened houses that have since
not needed to be rebuilt,
the old woman remembering some of the dead
by name.

She notices someone
descending past the family of farmers
and the town walls towards
a lacquered wagon of blue and red
interweaving vines, rising smoke,
and, beyond this, in a clearing,
grazing in knee-high grass, a dirty white pony.
She brings us in, shutting the casement.
The world has no mercy.

We are at the mercy of the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Enid Shomer

Wanting His Child

All night I dreamed of ornate fountains,
water sprayed in intricate designs
like liquid lace or the traceries of Gothic
windows turned translucent, silver
under a full moon. And I watched the water
travelling toward this art—down
from clouds, up through capillary
grasses from the oceans, dipped from wells
by women whose scarves waved like kelp
in dyeing vats where water briefly
married earth's colors to the cloth
and then sluiced on. And I thought
how water's clarity was born:
of mountains worn to chimney and ravine,
of streams hatching egg-shaped gravel.
And of how far love takes us—farther
than water—to bridge the vast distance
between *him* and *her:*
the quiet trespass to a room,
the chasm in the throat a name
must leap across. Oh something in me clots,
something longs for form when he's inside me,
and I want him there as long as he
can stay, until I'm drenched with pattern,
until we're flesh and thorn, the roar
of the stone lion whose mouth pours water
into the pool he guards, lighting small fires
in his own reflection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Tranter

Dark Harvest

Thunder unrolling over the vulnerable city,
purple and ink-blue, above the huddle of workers
scrambling to commute, some to a bar where
neon and darkness

conspire to enfold them, the avenues alive with
shoppers.
And rustling in the wind high above the age of doubt,
their transparent psyches rain-wet, rent by lightning,
spirits and angels

adrift in the jet stream know that we have to die,
each of us heavy with hope but a faint shadow trails
between what we need and what's accessible, at noon
rest and distraction,

nightmares at midnight. These ministers query
then relinquish us, but not before this one listens
for alarms or burns, the bang of passing time,
that one retreating,

skin all aglitter, for whom the avenue of blooms
shall never spell "love." The drinkers murmur their
ancestors' games, getting it right without
knowing the meaning,

code deviation: Drink, and drink. For that teacher
boys were everything, once, holding their breath
and proving their passion from a few paces away.
They can be cocksure,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crowded illusions, old pals, school buddies, dodging
into the past you should resurrect, or guess at,
a dim throng resemblance, who thought of your
soul as a plaything—

where to grow frankly through its enigmas means
foreign fucks, sad furious travel, this dilemma:
mud and air, part of the human breath it demands.
Listen to those guys

rattle and blather, he said, and you didn't remember
that melancholy, the twilight autumn air, then
the rumpled nameless force pushing us out
towards the horizon?

Garrulous history tells us that greed and ambition
stir the struggle to make great art, but then
the riders gallop up with their strange truth,
troublesome, painful.

Secretive rumours hang about, floating over the turf
like a low mist, the way you pitched your gay smiles,
not meaning anything, but who spilt our secrets?
Blabbing and telling!

Told them the story, but we spoke outline English,
nothing solid, our filthy lies melting into the air.
Buy a memory or two at the pool, who cares if it's
a little dishonest?

Too bad you only smile to rake back a smile
to crush a truth, or in an instant forgive,
each time shadows falling across the yard
laid out in plots that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seem to be speaking, making a pattern, and
like the wind sneaking past, it's what we're
losing that tugs the brain, leaking out; we
kiss and a heartache

ruins our childhood. Yet—no, though
their cruel trade troubles us, the hot boys
grow, grunt and turn in that awful flux,
girls become women,

summers diminish, the snapshots fade, also the
pesky details and the hot bothers that seem to be
all we can recollect of that holiday, that was
more like a combat.

And I remember the neon glow on her lipstick—
click!—her perfume, its melancholy ambience—
these fragments constrain memory into grief, our
mortal lot sliding,

crushing together those dirty complex diversions.
We each knew awkward love, that frail-leafed orchid,
and on her lap a heap of those diurnal notes.
Baffled and restless,

breezes at sunset bring us groans and whispers;
now the tide is full that will carry us off,
afloat on that glassy flood, the sky stooping to
touch us with incense.

This is a painting, of a catastrophe cranked up to
the higher range: look at it, sweetheart, you dazzle,
spell benumb my mouth, pink heart-beats
always retreating,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

asking for lightness, an enigmatic spice of hope,
but always at my back I hear a brutal rumbling,
the bursting roar of my own donut-fleshed heart.
A trace of my accent

colours your laughter, a linguistic infection. Upstream
the marriage blueprint's spoiled, and here on the porch
I'm holding you lightly in a dance embrace, watched by
celestial tourists

drifting above our foreigner-inflected summer.
My life is just an escapade, not a tragedy, so
thank the energy of the fiery hour, thank that
loose-lipped emotion,

a crisis that lets a new sentiment shape develop.
And our doting neighbours give us what you see,
unwelcome presents, and it's not even an occasion.
Endless revision,

erasing the discord: there they are, portrayed naked:
two lovers aware of the hourglass—figured space
between us—and the futures they build there,
reading a novel

one to the other, pulse to pulse signalling
sex, fear and betrayal, culture rearranged
and magically loosened and tightened again,
deep disappointment,

appalling encounters, garlands strewn far inland,
haystacks aflame in brilliant streaks in the valleys,
and on that sombre green beside the pond
spirits descending,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

calmly alighting in the gloom under the trees.
Here the painter has depicted the world's end, two
plausible powers, the red and the black, demons and
hard-hearted men sunk

deep in their silent employment, is it for you? And
for you this dismal project, this politics? And yet
the boys still dive and plunge among the foam,
talking with kisses,

lips intermingled, and rest on your jealous breast.
See, the ancestors lie down before that portrait
and the movie palaces of your youthful solitude
now lie deserted.

Rising to meet us, the ebony hand of night.
Here, a stain of moonlight. There, rippling noises,
love swept gasping through it. Disguises,
painting on linen,

it's a delusion and a false fabric, a sweet elocution
with as little meaning as a blackbird's batty chatter,
the theatre of the mundane sketched onto a backdrop,
perfect disorder

forming a pattern where the totally random must be
given
a motive and a meaning, sketched across the
foreground
near his head. So the artist figures things to come, a
singular discourse.

Longing for meaning can be fixed. First it's a
problem,
then it's the cure; but we are dispersed into a
rigmarole,
into the telling fishhook of a style, and so he
fluctuates fiercely,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

releasing his insights like ink dropped into water.
The audience shivers, watching everything they knew
fracture, their future a lifeless illusion,
  colours dispersing

slowly at first, then faster: their career path diagrams
riddled by lightning. I'm nursing a drink at twilight,
looking up at the thunderheads lit from below:
  everything's blowing

into the future that waits for us but doesn't want us,
nor the children, who await their change of faith,
or so I guess, staring down on the late avenues
  crowded with feelings.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Linda Pastan

Ideal City

Oil on panel, central Italy, c. 1500

Set in the silence of pure perspective,
the ideal city has no people in it,
only buildings. On these streets Order rules
with a golden stylus, and in the balance
of dome and arch and doorframe, we find
serenity, child of proportion.
Maybe this place is an alternate Eden
created by an urban God who hated gardens.
Or maybe this is Heaven just before Judgement Day,
and the buildings are simply waiting for the Chosen
who will rise from their graves to come and inhabit them.
At night when the clarity of light must finally fade
I hope that the Virtues step down from their columns
to dance
a little or, better still, cook pasta in the invisible kitchens.

But the Italian clouds with their casual cumulus shapes
don't really belong in this sky, and though the doorways
are partly ajar, they seem to open on nothing but
blankness.
In such a city, I wonder where lovers can embrace
or where the dog can lift his shaggy leg.
Then I want to break all the laws of Geometry,
to litter these spotless streets with the pungency
of orange peels and the glaze of cigarette wrappers,
to put my arms around the bronzed columns, then shinny
up them, pretending to be one of the Virtues myself.
I want to run through the streets playing the radio
with its volume turned all the way up.
I want to sign my name, and yours too,
with the scarlet graffiti of laughter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ottó Orbán

The Journey of Barbarus

Not the turmoil, the togas, the color TVs in the
Forum—
he gawked at them with the eyes of a bumpkin,
but he smiled at them too. The tree.
As it stood there on the river bank and, in the
spiritual medium
of oncoming autumn's sharp yet thinning glow,
greened frantically—as if Indian summer
would last forever and next month never come,
when in only an hour the leaves on the ground,
rustling like newsprint, would reach ankle-high.
And farther off, around the parking lots,
that same color again, the everything's-okay green.
And the frame houses flickering in the light, the road
crowded with cars, the university.

"It's strange," he thought, "that from here, the
world's market-place,
filled with so much to be desired and hated,
I take away with me, in the image of a tree,
the history of empires."

—translated from the Hungarian
by Bruce Berlind with Maria Kőrösy

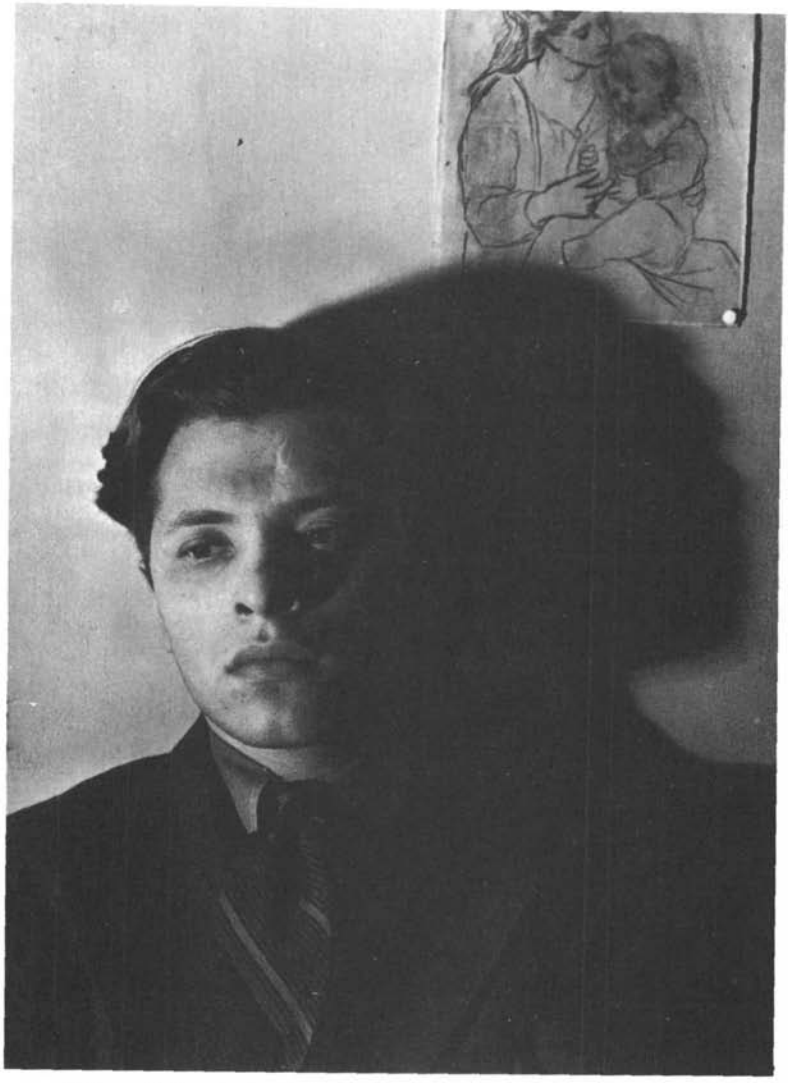
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tom Sexton

Homecoming

On the Irish coast, a rutted road
traced a winding track along the wind-
scored face of a limestone bluff.
Rock flowers cascaded to the surf.
Where the road began its long descent
a ruined church sheltered only wind,
and a great tree drained what light was left.
When we were younger, I would have brooded,
even in this ancestral place, on my fate
and Cú Chuláinn's battle with the sea.
You would have talked of Aphrodite.
Now after we've drunk our pint of bitter,
I limp, like that crippled smith, in your wake
back to our turf fire lifting its small wings.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Delmore Schwartz just prior to the publication of In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

© Mrs. Forbes Johnson-Storey.

James Laughlin.

Selected Letters of Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin

Delmore Schwartz first wrote to James Laughlin in the summer of 1937. Schwartz was twenty-four years old; Laughlin was twenty-three. Laughlin had started New Directions Press during the previous year, while still an undergraduate at Harvard. In the course of the two and a half decades during which they corresponded, Laughlin became one of the most respected publishers of the century. Schwartz, who began his career as the golden boy of literary New York, died in relative obscurity.

Schwartz's fame as a poet, critic and short-story writer was sparked by the publication of the story "In Dreams Begin Re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sponsibilities" in Partisan Review. *In 1938, New Directions made it the title piece of his first book, a collection of poetry, a verse play and short fiction. Schwartz was immediately hailed as the most promising poet of the generation that included Lowell, Bishop, Jarrell and Berryman. At the time of Schwartz's death in 1966, Robert Lowell wrote of him that "his destiny seemed the most hopeful of any young poet in 1940, then the downward road, some germ in the mind, the most dismal story of our generation perhaps." Unfortunately, Schwartz is remembered more often today for the difficulties of his later years than for the poems and stories that brought him early renown.*

The letters that follow reveal much more than the poet's ascendancy and decline. They record a relationship between poet and publisher that in its scope and commitment has all but vanished from contemporary publishing. The selection is taken from the over one thousand pages of their correspondence. W. W. Norton will issue Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin: Selected Letters *in a single volume edited, annotated, and introduced by Robert Phillips. The* Selected Letters *is the third book in the series of Laughlin's voluminous correspondence with New Directions authors.*

July 22, 1937

Dear Mr. Laughlin,

I do not know if you intend to pay any attention to unsolicited contributions to *New Directions,* but I think the enclosed pieces are the kind of work you want for your anthology.[1] If I am wrong, forgive me, and thanks for looking at them.

Yours,
Delmore Schwartz

[1]Schwartz submitted five poems and two short stories ("In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" and "The Commencement Day Address") to Laughlin's annual *New Directions in Prose and Poetry,* begun in 1936.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sept. 6, 1937

Dear Laughlin,

Will you return to me the manuscripts which you are not using. I'd like to try to dispose of some more of them and can't until I know which pieces you have and which pieces you are using. Thanks.

Yours,
Delmore Schwartz

October 11, 1937

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

As an editor, in defense of editors, of our time & our sanity, I must *give you hell* for disposing of a manuscript which you had offered to me. You simply must not do things like that.[2] It raises no end of trouble.

"In Dreams" is the piece I want most and I must insist on your making an effort to have it released for me. I'm sorry about this, but it is the right thing to do. The other manuscript which I have is "Commencement Day Address." I like this one too, but not as much as the other.

Please let me hear from you at once. Perhaps there is some reasonable explanation for what you did. I repeat, it is, in principle, a serious thing.

Sincerely,
James Laughlin IV

[2]Not having heard for three months Schwartz sent "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" to the editors of the new *Partisan Review.* The story appeared in *PR,* No. 4 (December 1937), and created a sensation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

October 18, 1937

Dear Schwartz,

No I didn't actually think you were wicked, but I just wanted to make enough of a stink so that you would realize that it was a serious thing.

When you didn't hear from me you should have sent a follow-up card. If there were no response to that you would *then* have been justified in sending the things elsewhere.

So we will use both the pieces and make acknowledgement to the *Partisan Review.* Where, I wonder, are they getting so much money from? It is many a day since anybody has paid me $40. I congratulate you.

Perhaps then *you* are the author of several poems [on my desk] that have been causing me some worry—since they seemed to have no owner. Here are the titles: "Discourse Concerning Santa Claus," "Poem Imitating a Fugue," "At This Moment of Time," "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," "Song." Are any of those yours?

Let me know.
Sincerely,
James Laughlin

October 19, 1937

Dear Laughlin,

I am glad that everything is straightened out so amiably. Perhaps I can give you something really good next year.

Those are my poems, all right, and I'd like to have them back. If I can get paid again for some piece, I'll begin to regard myself as a professional. The *Partisan Review* has a backer now, who is not only well-heeled, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also, it seems, very intelligent: That explains the handsome rewards.

I hope you were not annoyed by the review in this month's *Poetry:* Belitt[3] is a fool and everyone knows it. Meanwhile I see that kudos are again bestowed upon you for the second straight issue in *The Criterion.* And I hope, by the way, that you see my long piece on Yvor Winters in *The Southern Review.*

Yours,
Delmore Schwartz

October 24, 1937

Dear Schwartz,

I hate to part with these poems of yours because they are so damn much better than a lot of the stuff that I have already had set up for the book. However, there just isn't the space, so I'm only using the three short ones—"At This Moment of Time," "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," and "Song."

I want to use the verse as well as the prose, because people must get an eyeful of you. I think you are good. Maybe just beginning, maybe will not turn out, but something real going on. This is not just schmeichelei [flattery]; I don't have to get anything out of you.

I don't care what Belitt or anybody else says. I am not in the business to have little cat fights with literary ladies. I shall turn the cheek until the neck joints give out. I know what is in the book [*New Directions 37*]. There is some crap, some good stuff, some middling. Furthermore, everything is relative. Plenty of people liked what B[elitt] didn't like.

[3]American poet Ben Belitt (b. 1911) published highly a critical review of *New Directions* in *Poetry* magazine in 1936.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The thing is to get the nonconforming stuff in print when it is written and not fifteen years after. That is my job. I hope I don't make a mess of it.

Yours,
James Laughlin

NYC, Jan. 6, 1938

Dear Laughlin,

Thanks for writing to me so soon and speaking so generously of me. I will look forward to seeing you here or wherever you would like to meet me any time next week. Unfortunately this rooming house has no phone, but you can send me a card setting the time or you can walk in on me if you like—I'd prefer the card, but you can be sure of finding me at home; I'm somewhat of a recluse, a state of affairs which it seems you are going to help me to continue, much to my satisfaction. The whole business has become complicated, but I can tell you about that when I see you. This address is two blocks south of 8th St. and one block west of Washington Square Park. Until some time next week then,

Yours,
Delmore Schwartz

Jan. 13, 1938

Dear Laughlin,

I am sending you my volume of poems by express. I hope you will forgive me for the untidy and provisional

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way in which I have thrown the whole book together, but there is, as you know, a need for haste. I have stalled off Fadiman[4] for a week and he finds it difficult to understand my delay, although I explained to him that I wanted a publisher who would print my written poems, rather than one who would finance an unwritten novel. You were, by the way, quite helpful in mentioning Saroyan's case, for by taking money I would merely be getting into debt; I was actually unaware of this.

The book you're going to read is only in a tentative state of organization, as you will soon see. I have another play which might be, for all I know, better than the one which is enclosed in the book, and is certainly of a less disreputable plot.[5] Of the eighty-eight lyric poems which are in the volume, some of course will eventually be excluded. There is also the possibility of revision and of a few better poems before September, or whenever you would send the book off to the printers.

On the whole, however, I am sure there is enough evidence for you to make a decision. Please let me hear from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,
Delmore Schwartz

P.S. If the play is the only barrier, it could be simply excluded without substituting another one.

January 15, 1938

Dear Schwartz,

I have studied your manuscript and it confirms my belief that your work is very well worth publishing.

[4]Schwartz had discussed the possibility of a book contract—for a novel—with Clifton Fadiman, then editor-in-chief at Simon & Schuster.
[5]*Dr. Bergen's Belief* deals with suicide and pathological disease.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you don't mind being labeled, I think you are going to be the American Auden. Without being in any way derivative from him, you have a fluency that is comparable to his.

I should like very much to do the book. My plan would be an edition of five hundred in September. Your royalty would be fifteen cents a book until costs were paid, thereafter half of the net take. I would want an option on your next five books.

The play seems to me good, though perhaps it could profitably be cut a bit in the midsection. It lags there a little as drama, though it remains interesting as poetry.

What would you think of putting the play in *New Directions 1938*? That is just a hunch of mine. What do you think of it. The prose piece and the poems would make a book of 120 pages, which is about right for a book of poems. I figure the play at about 55 pages.

But all these matters can be worked out. The important thing is for you to decide whom you want for a publisher.

I repeat, if you want to make money, Fadiman can do the best for you, but if you want to serve God and not the Devil, I can do the best for you.

I'm returning the manuscript right away. As I am obliged to send it collect, I am enclosing some stamps to make up that charge.

Let me hear from you as soon as you know.

James Laughlin

January 23, 1938

Dear Schwartz,

I seem unable to get the "h" into your name at the first shot. I can't tell you how glad I am that you have decided

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to cast your lot with New Directions. I realize the sacrifice that you make but it is one which I think worthwhile in view of your understanding of what the art of writing can really be. If, like your Noah Luft,[6] you are trying to build a life that will satisfy you, I think that your piety will mean more to you than the immediate financial success. I think you will get the financial success in time, but by publishing the plays and poems you will get an artistic standing. There is always the danger that the young writer will go after the money first and in so doing imperil his ability to do real creative work. I think you have made the right choice and I shall do everything I can to prove it to you.

I'll make up some sort of simple agreement. I suggest that you give me the option on three books at the royalty I outlined (fifteen cents a book until costs are paid, then half the take), and then the right to revise the royalty against a further three-book option. Let me explain that. I would like to be able to subsidize you right now, but I simply haven't the cash. It is likely however that in a few years I will have the cash, if business conditions improve. Then I would like to give you the same sort of advances which the larger houses give, though for a higher type of work.

An agreement such as I suggest would leave you entirely free after three books, as you would be at liberty to reject the new options if my terms weren't satisfactory, but it would have the advantage of preserving the idea of continuity. I can only do my best work for you if I feel that you are going to be loyal. Such an agreement would facilitate that loyalty without tying you down to it.

Please let me have your reactions to this proposal. We must find the balance that will make our interests one.

James Laughlin

[6]A character in Schwartz's unpublished play *Venus in the Back Room.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

February 1, 1938

Dear Laughlin,

I am enclosing the signed contract with a few misgivings about being quixotic, with much relief that I am finished with publishers for, I hope, the next twenty years, but really with the strong feeling that everything is going to come out well for both you and myself. I had better explain the misgivings, even if it means repeating myself: The offer I am turning down to go with you would free me from the parental grip once and for all and also get me a little more of the world, flesh and devil than I have at present.

There are several things which are not quite right in the contract, but I am letting them go because I think that our interests are one, that though we scarcely know each other we have a friendly unity about the way things should be, or to put it pompously, that we both want to realize the same values. There is, however, one thing that I am going to insist upon—twenty free copies, which is the least an author is entitled to and which is, as you know, what he gets from everyone else. I need twenty copies because I want to keep my friends feeling that I am interested in their being interested in what I write—but seriously, I have to have them and can't afford to buy them; and I'm taking the liberty of changing the number in the contract.

The book will be ready in July when you get back from Europe, unless I have another spell of sickness[7] of the sort I had last year. After that's done, I'll revise the play you want to print in *New Directions 1938.* Printing it there may sell a few more copies of the book of poems. The cover, print and paper are hard for me to see, since I don't know what Bodoni is, nor cream-toned paper, but

[7]"For most of his life," James Atlas writes in his biography of Schwartz, "Delmore complained of a mysterious illness that beset him in February and March, although he never specified his symptoms."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if it is going to be like the Faber & Faber poetry books, it will be fine. I'll have a device ready, too, before you send the book to the printer's.

I'd like very much to write ballet scenarios for Kirstein,[8] and have two ideas, one involving comic-strip motifs, the other a baseball game. From all that I hear it would be a chance to make some money, which I badly need, badly in the sense that a few luxuries are sometimes a necessity. I'd be grateful to you if you sent me Kirstein's address and told him that I was going to submit a short scenario to him—or perhaps it's enough to mention your name.

All these fine reviews and all the rest of the things that I've been getting during the last few months are accumulating to the point where I am going to be terrified—because it can't last, I can't be being praised for the right reasons by so many people, it is much too soon, and it is taking my mind away from working. I hope that it does not make you expect me to be afraid that you will have such expectations. The latest salutation, by the way, is from Wallace Stevens, who sent the *Partisan Review* a letter, which they're printing, saying that my review of *The Man with the Blue Guitar* was the "most invigorating review" that he had ever had. On the one hand, this, all of this, is going to help you get rid of my books, and on the other hand you don't have to be afraid that I will take this praise too seriously, forget how much one has to do to be a good writer, or rest on laurels.

If I do not see you before you sail, goodbye, thanks for all your generosity, and I hope that Old Pagany[9] starts you writing again.

Yours,
Delmore Schwartz

[8]Lincoln Kirstein (b.1907). Founder and editor of *Hound & Horn* and later general director of the New York City Ballet.

[9]Reference to William Carlos Williams's novel, *A Voyage to Pagany* (1938).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

February 3, 1938

Dear Schwartz,

What the hell do your friends call you? They call me J.

Thanks for the contract. I know what you're giving up and I'll try to make it up to you just as soon as I can. Right now I'm working by candlelight as the steel business is not paying any dividends. If it does get going again, things will be different. I hope you aren't too devout a leftist to object to sharing the fruits of Sin.

Twenty copies is all right. I just put in six because that, I think, is the customary number. That's how many Fitts[10] got free from Harcourt.

I have changed my plans somewhat and may not go abroad till March. So perhaps I'll be able to see you again on my next visit to New York.

I am sending a note to Kirstein and suggest that you telephone him and make an appointment to see him, for, unless he is a hypocrite, he is readily accessible to "young talent" as they call it. His address is—damn it, I can't find his address, the card is missing from the files. Will you look it up in the telephone book and let me know what it is? If you can't find his own, look for American School of Ballet, or School of American Ballet.

I think the comic-strip ballet sounds good. You could use the stock figures and have them play out an action that would be more than mere parody—something with social meaning in it. A damn good idea.

I hope that you can get access to all the nice things that are being said about you so that we can use them for the publicity for your book. I want to give you the right sort of send-off with advance blurbs and pictures and advts. and all that. Will you ask the boys at the *PR* [*Partisan Review*] if we may have their permission to write to the big shots who wrote the letters for their permission to use

[10]Dudley Fitts (1903–1968) was Laughlin's English master at Choate School. It was he who arranged for JL to study with Ezra Pound in Italy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the quotes? Also, how are you fixed for a picture of yourself, preferably in tights or other art pose?

Send me K's address and I'll write him right away.

Best,
James Laughlin

February 8, 1938

Dear Jay,

My friends use my first name as I hope and expect you will. Difficult at first, it soon slips right off the tongue. Contractions have been tried without success, and I will have to tell you some day the riotous story of how I came to get the name and the magical effect it had upon my childhood.[11] In fact, the subject of names fascinates me and I have given it no little thought, the shift from formal surname to first name being itself, as I need not say, productive of the finest psychological shades between one and another. The kind of self-consciousness which comes up when you say, "May I call you by your first name?" to a girl is worth diamonds. You can recognize the extrovert and the introvert by this. The one assenting with ease and a joke, the other being moved and suddenly shy.

Your mention of the fruits of sin is piquant, since I have been supported and educated by the fruits of real-

[11]"Delmore Schwartz had a particular fondness for stories about the origin of his first name. Sometimes he would insist he had been named after a delicatessen across the street from the house where he was born, sometimes that his mother had been fond of an actor who was named Frank Delmore. In still other versions, the name was taken from a Tammany Hall club, a Pullman railroad car, or a Riverside Drive apartment house." (James Atlas. *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet.* 1978. F, S & G. p. 3.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

estate speculation. I am not a "devout leftist"; merely "devout" would be the word, if I can pretend to so much, and nourishing, and being led by a sense of ineluctable evil, and the endless bureaucracy involved in existence (Herr Kafka's obsession), and with a profound disgust and hatred of all churches, all parties, which debase always the divine, if only by attempting to give a name and a local habitation to it. When I was an undergraduate I studied for two years with Sidney Hook and James Burnham and thus the best brand of Marxism was pressed upon me, and the only result was a long thesis for Burnham on the relationship of religion and communism which seemed to perplex Burnham exceedingly. It does seem to me, however, that Marxism illuminates very well the inseparable tie-up of social and intellectual elements at any given moment of time, and it is also valuable negatively as a judgement of the present. Only the most naive actually think that any kind of salvation can come from a political party, and everyone worth speaking to in N.Y. now has seen the moral bankruptcy of Marxism in the Moscow trials. —Now you know what kind of an author you have on your team; you know, at least, as much as he does about it. But I hope that we will be able to discuss these matters many times hereafter, and as you imply in your fine essay in *ND* [*New Directions*], in speaking and finding words one finds out what one really means.

We can arrange the various matters having to do with my book later on, perhaps in June. Kirstein's address is 637 Madison Avenue, but I should think, from all that I have heard of him, that not too much can be expected—the American Ballet is really very poor. I have read most of *ND* and agree with you about Henry Miller, although I'd like to see what it all comes to in an extended book, and I like especially the pieces by [George Marion] O'Donnell and Mary Barnard, probably because they show a feeling for thought, tough-mindedness, I mean.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only if you have a sensibility as perfect and pure as [William Carlos] Williams can you get along without thinking.

Yours,
Delmore

[undated]

Dear Jay,

We looked for you briefly in Bennington last night.[12] We'd be delighted to visit you and see Williams, especially now that we have our 1931 Ford, known in the family as "Black Mule." I met the old boy in 1934, when I asked him to come to speak to our Poetry Club at NYU, and his opening remark to me was classic, if not Shelleyan: "Where's the can?" says he. There's another thing. [Allen] Tate is at Cornwall, Conn. and has invited me to come down and stay for a few days. I don't want to do that, but I would like to go over there with you. You never can tell when he might be handy for something, and besides, he's a good poet. . . .

Let us know about the visit and whether there's anyone there who will mind the fact that I have not had a haircut since May Day.

Yours,
Delmore

[12]Schwartz married Gertrude Buckman in June of 1938.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

December 14, 1938

Dear Jay,

My book [*In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*] arrived in time for my twenty-fifth birthday. I will not trouble you with my feelings except to say with the formality due on such an occasion: Thank you for printing it. I hope now that you are going to believe in me for several more books and not expect too much and not pay attention to the reviewers. It takes time to get really good, as I don't have to say, and it is sad but true that even the best writer has to write a good deal that is no good. What annoys me most is the flood of criticism which I have to write because I need the money: Five unwritten articles await me and there is liable to be another in every mail. What I would like to do is to get obsessed with my unfinished long poem[13] for the next six months.

Speaking of criticism, your article on Pound was excellent, much better than mine because it was full of concrete analysis. You ought to write more criticism, if only because the better your taste, the more honor involved in getting printed by you. Your latinity dumbfounded me: One does not take you for the Latin scholar.

Will you see that Symons of *Twentieth Century Verse* gets a review copy? He promised a review in his last issue. And also, as a troublesome favor, can you get Higgins[14] to send me a postcard whenever a review appears? There are papers very difficult to get in New York. I did, by the way, inscribe the five copies for Penn State and reship them. I wish also that you would keep all the orders you get: There are persons to whom I will never speak again if they do not buy copies of my book. May the Old Pervert who directs all things smile on New Directions.

Yours,
Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

December 16, 1938

Dear Delmore,

Well, here we are underway and as far as I know, everything is all right.

I was disappointed that Fadiman didn't do more; he seemed to miss the quality of the poems. But after all, he did say some pretty nice things about you.[15]

I haven't seen any other reviews. I'll send clippings down to you as they come along, but please send them back, as we need them for our permanent scrapbook. I am sending out nearly a hundred review copies as it is good advertising. Will send to Symons and all the other English johnnies.

It's hard to trace sales of books because so many people buy through stores, but a record is kept for all direct orders and you can scrutinize same the next time you come to Norfolk.

Very glad you have some lucrative articles. One has to eat. I have been making some money writing bilge about skiing. Glad you liked the Pound article. I felt it was pretty shallow.

Best to all,
J.

[13]He was writing *Genesis: Part I.*

[14]James Higgins was a member of Laughlin's New Directions staff in charge of publicity and promotion.

[15]Fadiman's short review appeared on Dec. 17, 1938 in *The New Yorker.* He called Schwartz "the most interesting and experimental writer I've noted in a long while."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[undated]

Dear Jay,

Louise Bogan's review in *The Nation* is favorable enough, I suppose, but from beginning to end it is full of mistakes which show how poorly she read the book. I think some good might be done if you wrote to *The Nation* just listing her errors. It would probably look much more disinterested coming from you. Here is the kind of letter which might be right:

> L. Bogan's review of DS's IDBR is full of unwarranted mistakes of fact which indicate the most careless and irresponsible reviewing. Miss Bogan leaves out the punctuation and changes the word "disease" to "desire" in one of her quotations, radically altering the meaning; and in the second quotation, she alters another word. She says that the story of the book is about childhood, while the story is not at all about anyone's childhood, but about the protagonist's view of his parents' courtship at the age of 21. She incorrectly names one of the poems which she mentions, she names Kant as one of the characters in the long poem of the book, although he is merely invoked once by the hero. And above all, she fails utterly to see the simplicity and directness of style which characterize Mr. S's long poem and which has been recognized and praised by such distinguished poets and critics as Allen Tate, Wallace Stevens, Mark Van Doren, and others. This is not a question of taste, but of an incompetent reading by your reviewer which is exhibited beyond dispute in the inaccuracies which are questions of fact. Surely *The Nation* owes it to its readers to provide reviews of important books in which the reviewer finds it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possible to quote from the book under review without changing the meaning and rewriting the words of the author.

As an advertiser, you could insist on the publication of this letter, and besides being free advertisement, it would serve to make the critics more careful with the books they get from you. They have no business writing as Bogan did. Let me know what you do.

Tally-ho!
Delmore

Even after the critical acclaim for In Dreams *Schwartz could not support himself entirely through his writing. There had been talk of him working for New Directions in the Norfolk, Connecticut office. But Laughlin's aunt, Mrs. Leila Carlisle—on whose estate the press was housed in a converted stable—had objected to Schwartz on the basis of alleged obscenity in* In Dreams. *(The word* fuck *appears twice.) Schwartz did receive many benefits from his success as an author. In 1939* Partisan Review *made him an editor, and in 1940—after a protracted search for a teaching position—he began teaching English at Harvard University. He also won a Guggenheim award during this period. Many of the following letters were written from Yaddo, the artists' colony, where Schwartz was invited to live for a period while writing.*

April 19, 1939

Dear Delmore,

I'm afraid we may not get so far with our plan to have you and Gertrude come to Norfolk.

I wrote to Aunt about it and she replies in the nixative.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She fears, I think, for your influence on me. She read parts of the book and was a good deal shocked, I guess. She seems to think you are a mixture of sex fiend and Communist from whom she will defend my innocence to the last breath.

That makes things rather difficult as I can't possibly afford to live anywhere else, or have the office anywhere else, than at Norfolk. Not for the moment anyway.

As you may have gathered, I have a good deal of trouble with my family about the books. Aunt liked the idea at first and gave me money for it, but when she found out what sort of thing I was doing she was horrified. Now she just tolerates the books in the hope that I'll reform.

It isn't an easy situation, but I have to put up with it for financial reasons. And also I am fond of her in spite of her prejudices.

I'm sorry. I'll work on her when she gets back and try to smooth it out somehow. These things have been done before. But it may take time. So you had better not count on that immediately. This is a blow, really, I was getting quite cheered up at the idea of having some intelligent people in Norfolk.

Please return the enclosed letter from [T.S.] Eliot.

Yrs. through this vale of adversity!
J.

Tuesday

Dear Jay,

I like your poem and will tell the *PR* boys to print it. There are, however, five of them to get past and they usually only believe me when I am jeering at some effort.

The news about your aunt and the job is quite a blow,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

especially since I have heard nothing from North Carolina for two months now, which must be their southern way of getting me used to the Final No. It is a pity I did not get a chance to speak with your aunt last summer, so that she could see how far from a sex fiend and Communist I am. However, it would have been difficult for me to stay at Norfolk all year, anyway. My impression was that we would be in Boston most of the year, or rather in Cambridge, and as a matter of fact, I would have to be near a big library if I was to write the critical articles I keep getting and which are my only financial consolation for being a poet. One idea occurred to me, that Gertrude and I might take a big apartment in Cambridge, half of which you could use as your office; but don't take the trouble to say anything about this, if it would not work. At any rate, I have begun to take desperate measures to avoid landing in the poorhouse with little Gertrude, the terror of 105th St.

Pound arrived last Thursday and immediately made a damned fool of himself by announcing that Mussolini was a great man. Naturally all the reporters were merciless after that announcement. But about blasting in general, and Pound's blasting in particular, I think you underestimate all the good he did when he was still in his right mind. He really made decent writing possible by yelling all the time: That was the way he managed to get Eliot printed. As far as the Bogan review goes, there are fourteen inaccuracies of fact, as I said, not to speak of the stupidity of judgement: Fourteen mistakes, you must admit, is quite a total, and even if Olympian calm is your program, that record deserves some notice. Thanks for getting after *The Nation.*

Fergusson's[16] dramatization was postponed because some epidemic worked its way through the whole college. One more problem is going to make trouble for us, namely, the first short novel I give you either next year or the year after, which will certainly be obscene at least

[16]Francis Fergusson's version of Sophocles' *Electra.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the whole thing exists in mind right now. I think you ought to do something about getting rid of the family censorship before then. I don't especially care to be known as an obscene writer, but the subject of this story and, anyway, of human relationships as they exist right now require, as I suppose I need not tell you, some free speech.

As ever,
Delmore

P.S. Pound said that the only American poet he could read was Cummings, that damned fool: You would think that he had never heard of WCW [William Carlos Williams], the greatest American poet since Emily Dickinson.

April 27, 1939

Dear Delmore,

I need hardly tell you that my relations with my family are one of life's chief problems. So I hope you will try to bear with the problem until I can get it straightened out. It is all a question of money. I would never put up with their ridiculous prejudices if I weren't dependent on them. I think Pound wrote a poem about that situation once—the dead hand, I think he called it. Well, there is a dead hand over New Directions all the time. They would love to stamp it out; on the other hand, they have a natural affection for their young. I am just sitting tight, trying to compromise—to keep New Directions going and still not alienate them altogether. They cannot disinherit me, because my father left money in trust for me, but the hell of it is, I don't get it until my mother dies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and she is healthy as a horse. Fortunately I have a little of my own—enough to keep going for six-seven years at the present rate. My hope is that by that time they will have woken up to the fact that what I am doing is not a disgrace to the family but a credit to it, and will kick through again. As I told you, both Father and Aunt were very generous when I started the thing, because they thought it was going to be harmless and polite. I guess Aunt froze right up as soon as she smelled sex. Often I have been about ready to tell them to go to hell. But if I did, I would just be condemning myself to inutility. There is no beating the game that I can see. It takes money to run a press like New Directions, and although the books might conceivably come to pay their way, you cannot count on that. The minute I began to count on making money I would drift into printing crap. The only thing I can see to do is to focus on the quality of the stuff and take the gain or loss as it comes—keeping the two kinds of value rigidly separated.

There is just a chance that things may solve themselves a little sooner. My brother and I are now waging a legal battle against a bank in Pittsburgh which is trustee for the estate of one of my uncles. We are convinced that the bank has done us out of something we were meant to get. We won the first round in the lowest court and the opposition has now appealed to the next court. If we are reversed there we will push it up to the State Supreme Court. But that all takes time and I am not all that optimistic about it. We have what seems to us a clear case, but as you know right and wrong haven't much relation to law.

If that comes through everything will be OK as the amount in question, although not large, would be quite sufficient for the needs of the press. We'll know about that within a year.

In the meantime all I can do is try to sit tight and hold everything. It isn't much fun, but on the other hand, you can't expect to have everything dumped into your lap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I tell you all this because I consider you a partner in the enterprise, and want you to know just how things stand and understand why I do what I do. I'm not being ornery.

Don't worry too much about the censorship problem. We wouldn't be doing that novel before 1940, would we, and a lot can happen before that. I expect divine intercession from the day to day having to lead a blameless Christian life from the day of baptism. Maybe.

Your idea of a big loft in Cambridge which would be combined living quarters and office is not so bad. I don't know what I'll be doing next fall, but I don't think I'll pass my divisionals this year. I'm a fairly smart boy but I just haven't done enough work. I may have to take them again next year, in which case I would want to be handy to the library also. Of course it is much cheaper for me to live in Norfolk, but perhaps if I boarded with you we could get it down to a low figure.

I can envisage a kind of poetical rabbit & publishing warren in Cambridge that would not be half bad.

Well, let the thing ride along and maybe something will work out. As I say, I expect an angel to come down in his car any moment. Its car, I guess. Maybe you'll get the job in Carolina after all.

Thanks for the kind words about the Hitler poem.[17] I have sent a copy to the *PR* gentry and hope they will do it. I would like very much to have that poem appear in that place. My connection with Pound always lays me open to attacks of being a Fascist and that is not very pleasant. The poem might help to clarify my personal position. I don't make political statements in *New Directions* because I want that to be strictly non-political.

I have given up trying to explain the facts of life to Ezra. If he wants to dig his own grave, all I can do now is try to keep some memory of what he once was alive.

[17]Laughlin's "A Letter to Hitler," included in his *Selected Poems.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He is in Washington now. He wants me to come down there but I can't do that. Too busy with my divisionals. And don't want to be his errand boy either. I'm all for his monetary principles but when he became a Franco & Hitler man, I found the going thick. I am willing to believe that the Duce has enlightened conceptions of finance, but that is as far as I'll go. If he does have an understanding of social credit there is no need for him to bag *useless* colonies. That's what I think. It looks to me like wishful thinking on Ezra's part. Because BM [Benito Mussolini] is his pal he wants to make Christ out of him willy-nilly. [. . .]

Pound probably didn't mention Williams because Bill has been telling Ezra to go to hell until he gets his nose wiped. Ezra was concluding his letters to Bill with *arriba España* and that was a bit more than Bill could keep down. . . .

Well, let's all keep our courage up, and here's to the lit'ry beehive. I think it could be damned good.

Etc.
James Laughlin

April 2, 1940

Dear Jay,

. . . I've been reading the new cantos with the greatest pleasure. The man may be the biggest jackass in the world and working hard at getting even bigger, but he has the best ear for versification since Milton, and maybe the best ear that anyone ever had who used the English language. Poets will be learning their meters from Pound for the next two hundred years, and it ought to be no small change to you that you are printing him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Your concern about attacks on the Jews can be dismissed. Outside of the first page, in which he quotes a passage from Franklin, which is, I am told, a fabricated remark which Franklin never made[18] there is nothing at all about us poor bastards. . . .

Yours,
Delmore

Wednesday

Dear Delmore,

. . . I really think [Kenneth] Rexroth is one of the most superior humans alive. He reminds me extensively of [John Brooks] Wheelwright—a Wheelwright without psychic kinks. R. seems to enjoy life. A vast store of anecdotes delivered in an intermountain drawl. We spent Easter rock climbing down in the mountains and you have no idea how near you were to coming into your small fortune. We did a small, very vertical chimney and on the way down my extremities became completely dissociated from the petrous substance. Fortunately the sovietic bard was belaying me with his rope from above and by intellectual ruggedness maintained me in the air, for all the world as Virgil, to whom my poetry has so often been compared, would say, like the wily spider dangling from his self-begotten silky cord, until I retrenched myself in the rock.

James Laughlin

[18]In "Canto LII," Pound writes: "Remarked Ben: better keep out the jews / or yr / grand children will curse you . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Friday, December 16, 1941

Dear Jay,

I am sending you the first two hundred pages of *Genesis* today in a copy which is a mixture of carbons, revisions and older versions, but as close as I could get to the final version without parting with what I need here. These two hundred pages are substantially the basis on which I was given a Guggenheim renewal.

I want you to publish it separately. It can be called *Genesis* or *Genesis Part I* or *Made in America* or *Made in New York* or *An Atlantic Boy* or *A New York Childhood.* Many other titles might be considered to take care of the fact that it is just the first part—*The Beginning,* or *Book One.*

This publication of the first two fifths of the poem seems by far the wisest policy to me for a number of reasons, intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic reasons are bound up with the difficulty of getting a proper conclusion right now. If I try to force one, I may wake up in six months and be sorry. But these two hundred pages I am certain of, I have tried them out on myself in the worst despondency and lack of energy and I am sure they mean what I want them to mean and what they ought to mean. And if they don't, there will still be time to make changes whenever the whole poem is published. Long poems have been published in parts from *The Divine Comedy* to *The Cantos,* and no comparison in quality is needed here: The form is the same, the long narrative poem can be published in its natural divisions. But more than that, it is too much of a risk right now, with everyone thinking of war, to print five hundred pages and expect it to get attention between one crisis in the Far East and another in Iceland and a third in Libya and a fourth in southern Russia.

The fact that the Philistines of the Guggenheim committee were pleased with this two fifths should serve as a good external gauge. Some of the internal gauges

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worth mentioning are as follows: It may seem for a while that the alternation of Biblical prose and blank verse is too predictable, but it will, I think, be felt as an acceptable *formal* device, like the refrain in a ballad or like rhyme or like a tragic chorus. If the dead as a chorus seem bizarre, remember that Dante wrote the best poem ever written *by using the dead as voices.* If the fusion of narrative and commentary seems strange, remember that, as I intend to point out in a short preface, this story-succeeded-by-commentary is one of the profoundest, most deeply rooted and most accepted experiences in modern life: The newspaper story-editorial, the play-and-review-of-the-play, the travel film with voice as commentary and newsreel with commentator are all primordial examples of what is going to be an inevitable literary form (inevitable because the life we live forces it upon us). In any case, as I just said, the chorus is one of the best and most popular devices invented in any time. Louise Bogan made a fool of herself again by denying this in reviewing *Shenandoah.* (She says that the poet always disappears from the scene when Dante walks half the way through Hell and Purgatory with a poet next to him and stops to discuss versification with other poets on the way.) . . .

I also want to answer your letter in detail as soon as I have time. One point worth mentioning in advance is that the question of matching another publisher's advance is beside the point. Whether I am worth what I am told by some publishers I am worth I may never know; they say they would spend from five to ten thousand dollars advertising a novel of mine. Not only would you not do this, but the organization of ND gets worse all the time and you have just put it all in the hands of one [Emily Sweetser] who, though a fine person in many ways, has just been running it into the ground because of ignorance, hysteria and neuroses unequaled on the Eastern Seaboard. The only reason you put it in her hands is that you are busy with the ski hotel: What reason has anyone to believe that you will not always be busy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with something else besides ND? It strikes me that the whole thing would be much better moved completely to Hollywood, since you obviously intend to be in Utah most of the time. In fact, that seems to me the only possible reasonable arrangement, moving everything including E.S. (who would do well enough with a superior nearby) near you. ND needs you as a bow needs an arrow. However, be this as it may, it is nothing I intend to do anything about until I give you a novel.

Another thing I ought to try to answer right now, since it may shine on the mss. I am sending is that, lucky or not (and I was not very lucky with Rimbaud, for if I had not been at Yaddo because of poverty I would have shown it to someone at Columbia), and intrinsic merit apart, it should be clear to you by now that what I write attracts a great deal of attention (did you, for example, see the spread of *Shenandoah* in Sunday's *Times?*) Perhaps it is a streak of vulgarity or something else, but almost everything I have published has rung the gong for four years; the instance of the translation shows that it is not my beautiful eyes or winning personality or Aryan background which is responsible; it is the work itself, whether for the wrong reasons or not I do not know.

Please read the mss. as soon as possible and with the best attention. Printing this first part will solve many problems at one stroke. I will try to get a final version to you quickly; don't let rough spots here and there throw you off.

Yours,
Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

© Gertrude Buckman.

Schwartz in Cambridge in the forties.

The preceding letter was sent by Schwartz with his only complete typescript of Genesis *out to Utah, where Laughlin had begun to spend an increasing amount of time running his Alta ski lodge. The manuscript did not arrive, and Schwartz felt that Laughlin, who had expressed reservations about the poem, had in some way tried to lose the manuscript. After a four-month search, it was found under the floorboards of the town mail truck. In March of 1943, Schwartz and his first wife, Gertrude, separated, and a year later they divorced.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

December 27, 1941

Dear Jay,

I sent you at Alta a rough, approximate copy of the first part of *Genesis* the same day that I wrote you about publishing it as a part. It should have arrived at least two weeks ago and perhaps it did, among other packages you have put aside or not looked at. It has a ND label on it, and looks like most of the ms. packages you get. The idea of its being lost scares me because there is a stretch of thirty pages of which I have no copy other than three revisions back. We have just started an airmail tracer. Will you look for it right off and read it as soon as you can and write me immediately? I have to type out the whole two hundred pages and the new conclusion to this part for the printer, and I want to write a short introduction explaining the method of the poem and the dual use of blank verse and Biblical parallelism. The numbers, by the way, are out, since they look pretentious and the paragraphing will serve the same purpose of a formal distance and rhythm. . . .

I look forward to seeing what you said against the war. It was a noble gesture, anyway, but I am sure you are right in taking it out now when it would merely be resented. When the war is over, everyone will decide that it was wrong to go to war.

In the script of the first part of *G,* which I hope you have, some of it may seem, at first reading anyway, episodic in character. This was necessary to the structure of the whole thing. The conclusion I have just written generalizes the whole part, however, and apart from this, the episodes have a temporal order which carries them and which, at the very least, is not different from Thomas's *Portrait of the Artist* [*as a Young Dog*], with the additional strength that it is not straight fiction and is like Dante and Virgil passing from episode to episode also. (This comparison is descriptive and not evaluative and not my head swelling, as of your recent letter, that poem having been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published in parts also, and although I must admit conditions have changed somewhat, it is still being read mostly in parts.)

Delmore

Jan. 7, 1942

DEAR MR. LAUGHLIN,

Henceforth I will communicate with you in the cold objective style. This may or may not prevent you from remarking from Norfolk to romantic Alta that I am a drunkard. Your new method of getting at me and insulting me appears to be imputation. First, I play the part of Judas and write the *Advocate* review; then I write when drunk. I drink only to get to sleep when I have been writing all day; to drink at any other time would be a waste because I would then have to drink so much more to sleep.

Send me back my two Monday letters, so that I can make out what it is, except an epistolary style modeled or rather inspired by yours, that made you think I was drinking. Also send me back my poem. I want both these things and I want them very much, so let us not argue about it. . . .

I have all the fame I want for the time being; now I want power to protect it or money and probably both. If this seems a drunken statement to you, come to Cambridge and I will make it in person after walking a straight line. . . .

Now I have wasted all this energy on you, which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would otherwise have gone into a new chapter. Enough of these insults and imputations. Please send me back poem and letters and please answer all the questions I've asked.

Yours truly,
MR. DELMORE SCHWARTZ

P.S. If you must have quotes, why don't old quotes do? Maybe it is the extreme excitement of writing better than ever before that seems like drunkenness to you, when I relax into letter-writing?

[undated]

Dear Jay,

. . . There is still no word about the mss. Please make one more effort to find out if it is not mislaid somewhere in the ski jump. If I hear nothing by the end of next week, I will have to rewrite the passage of which I have no up-to-date version. I trust that you have not forgotten your promise about getting someone capable, at least within reason, of running the business, since you have obviously decided to spend your life skiing and falling off roofs, or whatever it is you find so engaging in romantic Alta.

Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Friday, Jan. 17, 1942

Dear Jay,

. . . I wish you would stop throwing the word *neurosis* about, at least with regard to my behavior. I don't want to get pedantic about it, but it is a technical term and means a state of mind which actually prevents normal behavior. My behavior is nothing if not normal; I teach, correct papers and try to write every day. I resent the way teaching takes up time which might be spent in writing, but this resentment is perfectly conscious and nonpathological. I suggest that you just call me ill-tempered.

The express office has begun to stall about whether they have received word on their two tracers, so I suppose the whole business is hopeless and I will have to begin rewriting the pages of which I have no copy and also feeling for the corrections which were not made on the carbon. I confess that I do not look forward to this task: Is this too a neurosis? . . .

Delmore

[undated]

Delmore,

You speak of going off to NYC. If you have a Harvard contract I should certainly advise you hold on to it. I have some knowledge of those creatures in the big city and I can tell you they will kiss you today and cut your throat tomorrow. Strongly I urge you to recall the wise saying of the folk: All that which glitters is not true gold. Yes Sir.

Weary not my unhearing ears with tales of [Lionel] Trilling and other miffed or unsatisfied authors. It is true that things could be conducted a great deal more actively

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if I were there, but I prefer a mixed life to a single life. For what is life for but to enjoy it, and certainly in the scales of happiness a fine day in the bright sun and snow on one of our mountains here is of more worth than publishing a book by a dyspeptic author. Everything in its place, I say. A little of this and a little of that and the whole makes a variety and a pleasure. To take ND with utter seriousness would be to become soon a nervous wreck. Is this not true?

Draw what inferences you wish from this letter, dear Delmore, but believe, I beg you, in my undying interest in your quaintly abstracted soul and luminous literatures. And do not fear that I will not welcome you back to the fold if you have sad and disillusioning experiences in the city for which Babylon is too pleasant a name.

However, one final word. Do not become a cheap writer. Keep up your standards. It is better to be read by eight hundred readers and be a good writer than to be read by all the world and be Somerset Maugham. Alleluia. Who would think that came from Good Time Jack, the barman's delight?

Much snow here,
Jay

3/5/45

Jay,

Must woo the frigid muse and eat lunch in solitude. How about coming down here and having dinner in the Village some night this week? You can leave a message for me at *PR*

Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

© James Laughlin.

Schwartz and his second wife Elizabeth Pollet at their farm in New Jersey.

Feb. 1, 1951

Dear Jay,

I tried to obey your command in last communiqué to relax and I did relax for half an hour, but there is no rest for the wicked. We bought a new used car on the 21st, after extorting a loan from a friend, and I thought, "Now I can relax in this brand-new used Buick 1941, ninety-day guarantee, even though first gear is not all that it might be; especially since Elizabeth,[19] who was once the quiz kid of Canada and mastered the calculus (although she can never figure out what age she is) has learned how to drive very quickly." So there I was, seated next to my serene wife, driving to Princeton in the early morning and admiring the pretty countryside which, with the thin lines of the trees and the snow on it looks just like Brueghel, and some Japanese prints. But Elizabeth, who was born in the New England conscience, had begun to

[19]Elizabeth Pollet, whom Schwartz married in June of 1949.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

speed for fear of being late, and in her moral haste she passed a school bus unloading and the state police were upon us again with a thirteen-dollar ticket. I tried to argue out of it by pointing out that Elizabeth had almost been arrested as a blonde bandit and that our power lawn mower had been stolen a month ago without any reparation on the part of the police, but all in vain. The crooks steal our property and the cops take away our (borrowed) money. I drove to New York the next day and received a fifteen-dollar ticket for parking on the wrong side of the street for ten minutes while trying to extricate an old kerosene stove from our cold-water flat on Hudson St. and bring it out here so we won't freeze to death in the sub-zero weather; twenty-eight dollars in twenty-four hours for the sake of Elizabeth's lordly stipend: fifty dollars a week. I never expected to be rich nor until recently desired to be, but this is going too far in the other direction.

Nevertheless, it is truly darkest just before dawn and the next day Elizabeth received an airmail cable from Marguerite Caetani[20] accepting seventy pages of her short novel, *A Cold-Water Flat,* which you read last December. Now if you tell the lady how hard up we are so that she will pay Elizabeth twenty dollars a page, and if we can keep the news from the state police, we may, D.V., be able to buy a new power mower which we will hide ninety feet underground all winter.

Please send me news, news, all the news, if you can. I feel as if this were an extra-inning ball game, and you were Bobby Thomson [Giant baseball star]. . . .

PR raised exactly $500, despite a two-month campaign and an exciting party at which I met Victor Weybright [publisher of New American Library], who seems very nice and certainly seems to like to drink.

After much careful study of the financial situation, I

[20]Publisher of the international literary magazine, *Botteghe Oscure.* An American, she was the wife of Prince Caetani of Rome.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came to the tentative conclusion that this is the time to borrow money, since inflation is likely to continue and when you have to pay the money back it will be worth less than it is now.

Delmore

April 10, 1951

Dear Jay,

Many thanks for letting me read Brossard's novel.[21] I cannot sincerely say that I think it is any good, but perhaps I am wrong again.

Your poem is supposed to appear after six previously accepted verses have been published, but if you feel impatient, let me know. There is never room for much poetry in any issue, and when we shifted from monthly to bimonthly publication, everything was slowed up.

I am sorry to hear that you are bored skiing. I personally have been bored since 1942 when my first wife, little Miss Gertrude, declared that no girl could be interested in me. Pure curiosity as to the truth of her remark made me engage in operations which soon demonstrated that anyone who wrote poems was regarded by the entire female sex as an impersonation or incarnation of Phoebus Apollo. This discovery of the extremely literary character of the female libido destroyed my *joie de vivre* and since then I have been bored.

Elizabeth did not get a Guggenheim, so I have been trying to sell my soul, but with little success, since so many other souls are for sale. I've thought of becoming a banker like Uncle Tom,[22] just so I might be near

[21]New Directions published Chandler Brossard's novel, *Who Walked In Darkness,* in 1952. Its portrayal of Anatole Broyard created a scandal.
[22]T.S. Eliot, who worked for a time at Lloyds Bank, London.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

money, or a big-time gambler. Gamblers are very interesting. Did you read how one of them answered an innocuous question put to him by [Senator Estes] Kefauver? "Probably yes," he said, "and probably no." In how many other fields of endeavor does such politeness and effort at exactitude show itself?

I encountered Oscar Williams on 8th St. the other day. He was carrying four anthologies by other anthologists and he explained to me what must be a new concept: the plagiarized anthologist. He thinks the other anthologists have been stealing his ideas. I suggested that he retire as an anthologist, since he now holds the world's record, and he said he meant to retire after just one more which was to be entitled: *From Thomas Wyatt to Dylan Thomas.* How about, *From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf?* I asked him, but instead of answering me he rushed uptown, so I guess Scribner's may have to come through again. . . .

Best,
Delmore

May 8, 1951

Dear Jay,

I can't find your last letter at the moment, but will try to answer it from memory.

You mention your poems, but I thought you just gave me one, entitled "Step On His Head." However, if there were two or you have another one you want to publish now, please send it to me at the above address.

Unless I am mistaken, which is likely enough, you may have taken my remarks on money in my last letter as a kind of hint, naturally enough. But I merely meant to report on what preoccupied me, which is the only way I can write letters, and I sincerely yearn for the day when our friendship is so pure that all my royalties can be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assigned to some charitable cause such as a society for making it clear to the American people that [General Douglas] MacArthur is an unspeakable ham.

I have decided not to be a bank clerk, after all, since I would probably be paralyzed by the conflict between my desire to steal money and my fear of doing so.

It was pleasant to learn that you expected our correspondence to be read in the international salons and boudoirs of the future. Do you think they will be able to distinguish between the obfuscations, mystification, efforts at humor, and plain statement of fact? Will they recognize my primary feelings as a correspondent—the catacomb from which I write to you, seeking to secure some word from the real world, or at least news of the Far West—and sigh with compassion? Or will they just think I am nasty, an over-eager clown, gauche, awkward and bookish? Will they understand that I am always direct, open, friendly, simple and candid to the point of naïveté until the ways of the fiendish world infuriate me and I am poked to be devious, suspicious, calculating, not that it does me any good anyway? And for that matter, what will they make of your complex character?

It develops that the jukeboxes in bars now have an item entitled Silence, which costs a nickel, just like Music. This can only lead to drunken disputations between those who want Silence and those who will be goddamned if they can't have a little Music with their beer.

The Giants, after losing eleven straight and thus preventing me from buying the newspaper for eleven days, defeated Pittsburgh twice in three days, which made me reflect on the fact that I have been a Giant rooter for thirty years: The expense of spirit in a waste of games.

Yours,
Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

June 30, 1951

Dear Delmore,

I was very glad to hear from you and get the news about life in the upper reaches. It must be very intense. Here in Norfolk we have the venerable Chauncey Brewster Tinker[23] giving the literary lectures at the music school, and he is very *sly* about A.E. Housman.

I think that is fine about the house in the country, and I hope you can get it, but would you be able to commute to the college where you are to teach? The way things are going in general in the literary world, I can't see how any serious writer is going to make a living just by writing. I think publishing as we know it is going to collapse in the next five years, with the 25-cent people taking over direct relationships with popular novelists and new book publishing being limited to How-to-Do-Its and He-Did-Its.

Business has been worse in the past year than anyone can remember and all except those who have had at least three best-sellers or Books-of-the-Month are preparing to shoot themselves. As for me, I shall simply retire to the country, eliminate all overhead, and practice the pure essentials—printing books, selling them to the really-interested by mail, and bypass the prodigious waste of advertising-promotion-sales pressure, all of which is now revealing its complete futility to even the great minds who invented it. A book of poetry, after all, is in its essence not the same as a bottle of mouthwash.

Thus the literary future for you, Delmore, seems to be one of austerity. After all, Mallarmé taught English and wrote descriptions of ladies' dresses. But I see no reason why Elizabeth cannot sail right into the pocketbooks without much compromise of quality. After all, if they were not frightened by the first book they are not likely to be put off by the later ones—which will be, I judge,

[23]Yale professor of English and a popular lecturer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

increasingly gay, now that Pollet is pitching for Branch Rickey's Amazing Pirates.

I wonder whether you are still a Giant fan now that they have become the rage of Negroes, barbers and Durocher: This is the team that fits the spirit of the age. As Maglie "shaves" Campanella the blood of the polloi pleasantly rises and all those animosities against their mothers which Henry Luce seeks to vent on the Chinese are released as healthfully as bubble gum. We must have a look at all that when you get back.

See you soon,
JL

© James Laughlin.

Schwartz at his farm in New Jersey.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

July 16, 1951

Dear Jay,

Your last communiqué was rather on the enigmatic side, even to the point of being sent to Ohio instead of Indiana,[24] but since existence is so full of mysteries, I am content to accept a few more, now and then. . . .

I am sorry to hear that business is not good, and that you are moving toward austerity; I must insist that I have been living in austerity for the past fifteen years, and certainly not in the lap of luxury, teaching English just like Mallarmé and if not describing ladies' dresses, doing my awkward best to find out what is beneath them.

Bloomington continues to be very interesting. Among my students I've been trying to develop the idea that it was named after Leopold Bloom. Glenway Wescott has been here and he has lectured on the modern novel, describing Henry James as a Fascist who appeased English aristocracy and American plutocracy, and Dostoyevski as the apostle of pure evil. Joyce moreover committed the sin of pride by trying to invent a new language, and Willie Maugham—as he called him—his dear good friend, is a very great author. It was also revealed for the first time that Henry James left France because when he went to see Gustave Flaubert, Flaubert was not wearing shoes, just carpet slippers, which embarrassed Henry so much he immediately moved back to London.

The other night I met Dr. [Alfred] Kinsey, who looks like a somewhat bemused rhinoceros, and when I learned that Wescott had been doing research for him for the past two years, I warned him of the coming victory of heterosexuality, a prediction which made him sufficiently curious to invite me to his house next Friday and inspect his library and files. I will send you a full report, if you want one.

[24]Schwartz was teaching at the Indiana School of Letters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My new book of stories is finished and I am just letting it cool off a while before sending you a copy.[25] It contains the best sentence of all my efforts: "Although ordinarily not thought of as such, the mind is the first of the erogenous zones."

Did you know that Villiers de l'Isle-Adam had a novel[26] in which the hero is Thomas Alva Edison, who is very sad because he was born too late to make phonograph recordings of all the great sounds of history—the fall of Jericho, the Flood, the opening of the Red Sea, and the like? An Englishman in love with a very beautiful and very stupid opera singer commissions Edison to make a dummy automaton who looks just like the singer and sings like her, so that he will be free of his infatuation. Edison does, and the two ladies meet and it is all quite profound, in its way. Maybe you ought to get the book translated and published?

I thought you were going to England this summer?

Yours,
Delmore

Unfinished Narrative Poem about Ethel Schwartz

In nine short months, the cat Ethel
Has nine kittens!
In nine long months, I have only written
One short poem, and it is not at all as
well-constructed
As the least of the kittens, which the reader can
see
By direct inspection . . .

[25] *Successful Love and Other Stories* (1961) was published by Corinth Books, not New Directions.
[26] Apocryphal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unfinished Narrative Poem about Buttons Schwartz

My cat Buttons
Is far superior to Barbara Hutton.
She is poor but sincere,
While Miss Hutton is probably neither poor nor sincere
And is probably just as much of a glutton . . .

September 10, 1952

Dear Jay,

. . . I see that the Ford Foundation is tinkering with the intellectual level of television. This seems to me a profound error, to judge by my impressions of the new art form garnered at the Village saloon where I irritate the bartender by drinking only Coca-Cola: The dramas on TV have an effect hitherto unknown in any literature or art. Their representation of existence appears to be so awful, banal, vulgar and pointless that the "viewer" returns to his own life with a feeling of *escape.* Instead of escaping from life's pain by means of literature or art, we now can enjoy escaping from TV drama into actual existence. To improve TV would be to lose this new and important experience. If Dante were able to revise the *Inferno* he would have the new form of damnation be an eternity in which one looked only at TV.

Yours,
Delmore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

April 14, 1953

My dear Delmore,

I want to apologize for losing my temper with you this morning on the telephone. I think you must in all honesty agree, however, that you provoked me. Your statement that I was not trying to help you struck me as one of the most extraordinary remarks that I have ever heard.

Over the years at New Directions I have continued to publish your books, although not one of them has ever been really profitable. When some years ago you told me that you needed money for doctors' bills I gave you the largest advance ever given by New Directions. And I think you will agree that I have not hounded you about this advance, even though you have made little effort to complete the book in question.

When a few months ago you told me that you needed money for your wife's medical bills, I helped you get a job with Intercultural [Publications], and I have continued you in that job, even though your performance has been irregular, because I sensed that you were under great nervous pressure and that your work would soon improve.

It seems to me, after reflection, that the best thing for me to do in your case, since my most sincere efforts to help you seem only to have made you resent me, is to separate myself entirely from all decisions affecting your status.

I plan, therefore, to leave all problems connected with your relations to Bob Macgregor, and all matters connected with your work at Intercultural to Hayden Carruth. I will not attempt to influence them for or against you. Both are reasonable and honorable people, and I feel sure that they will judge you entirely on the basis of the quality and regularity of your work, or the fairness of your proposals.

With best wishes, as always,
J.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

April 14, 1953

Dear Delmore,

I hereby release you from any or all options on future books of yours which may be held by me or by New Directions.

Yours very truly,
James Laughlin, President
New Directions

In 1954, Schwartz resigned from the editorial staff of Partisan Review, *and that same year he lost his job—due to budget problems—at* Perspectives, *the magazine of Intercultural Publications where Laughlin was the editor. Although their business relationship was terminated in 1953, the two intermittently continued their friendship and correspondence until the early sixties, when Schwartz began to cut himself off from virtually all his friends. In 1958, Schwartz's selected poems,* Summer Knowledge *(Doubleday), was awarded the Bollingen Prize for poetry.*

Nov. 2, 1954

Dear Jay,

Please excuse me for not writing you before now, since I was so pleased that you were satisfied at least with my review. You may not be aware of how pure—and how rare—my delight was, unless I add that this is the first expression of the sort in four years, and the third in ten, for any literary effort of mine. I was also pleased that you seemed, in your letter, to be more cheerful than you had for a long time. Unless intuition deceived me, your mel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ancholia between the lines was without precedent & of such intensity that I wondered if the offer of some few pints of blood, not entirely free of melancholia too, all that I have of negotiable goods, would be of any use.

I may be a little late, but I cannot pass over the great World Series victory and add that I now feel free to welcome you to the inner elite of loyal Giant fandom. When you first announced your conversion last spring, I was pleased, but nervous—the latter on a purely personal basis, namely, that all ventures in which we have been united have appeared to begin well and then to bog down disastrously, to rise again in triumph which also ceased precipitately, resembling in this respect the course of American capitalism, but tempting me, at times, to think that your fickle affections had an important role. However, clearly there can be no question of the overwhelming effect or coincidence which has accompanied your first year as a Giant fan. Shall we agree, tentatively—in case you are in Europe or Asia at the time—to attend the first game of the 1955 season together? Personally I prefer most of the time to watch on TV, since I can address whatever remarks occur to me to Durocher without any harm other than scaring and turning the neighbor's cows' milk to vinegar. I must add that your contention & the prevailing view that Willie [Mays] is a primitive, spontaneous being was shown to be untrue during Cleveland's Armageddon; he was asked if he thought that he had a chance to throw out some Cleveland base runner and his answer was: "*If* you stopped to ask yourself questions like that, you *never* thrown anyone out." This is, I think, the insight of a highly intellectual being who realizes the limitations of the intellect & introspection very much as Bergson did.

To pass from the sublime to—Eisenhower: I think I now know why Dwight hangs out around Gettysburg so much: He goes there to work out the way he would have directed hostilities had he been Meade or Lee. If you know any Texas oilmen who, though so concerned about states' rights and the like, are engaged in invading the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rights of other states, such as Illinois, by enormous campaign contributions, it would be no less than an act of friendship, such as friendship requires, to pass along my view that instead of trying to buy elections and favors so wastefully, they ought to do something simpler and less expensive. They ought to build an enormous aircraft carrier, place upon it a golf course which is incomparable, sail it up the Potomac & present it to Dwight: Would this not be an incomparable proof of friendship and please Dwight very much? Not only that, it might be the last anyone ever saw of him. . . .

Yours,
Delmore

Telegram
Syracuse, New York
February 11, 1963

JAMES LAUGHLIN, PHONE IMMY, REPORT DELIVERY
HOW ABOUT SMOKING THE PEACE PIPE WITH ME
HERE IN SYRACUSE
DELMORE

In his last years, Schwartz's drinking increased, his neurosis deepened, and he collapsed into paranoia. He claimed knowledge of intricate schemes against him—usually involving usurpation of his second wife, Elizabeth Pollet, by both Governor Nelson Rockefeller and President John F. Kennedy. He occasionally disappeared from Syracuse University, where he taught in the English Department.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

© Jane Lougee.

Schwartz circa 1958. W.H. Auden said of this photograph, "Nobody should look that unhappy."

At Syracuse, Schwartz's teaching was often indifferent. As told by David H. Zucker, then a graduate student and teaching assistant, "He would come to class most often looking tormented, sallow, bloated, shuffling and read aloud in a passionless voice, stalling for time and glancing repeatedly at his watch."[27] *Eventually the university urged Schwartz to commit himself to Twin Elms, a psychiatric center, where for a time he was helped. Schwartz did not pay his bills to Twin Elms, however, despite the fact that he was making a good salary—$16,000 a year in 1962—and had nearly four thousand dollars in his bank*

[27]Stephen Blank, "Wasted Genius" (*Syracuse Herald-American*), June 13, 1982.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

account.[28] *According to Atlas, he paid for his drinks at The Orange, a campus bar, with one-hundred-dollar bills.*

Next began a series of moves from one Syracuse apartment to another. Skyline Apartments on James Street, his first address, was elegant. His subsequent lodgings were not. Sometimes he did not leave campus for his apartment at all, but spent the night on a sofa in the basement of the Hall of Languages. Then in January, 1966 he abruptly left the city and the university for the last time. He gave no notice, despite the English Department's having supported unanimously his recommendation for tenure at the end of the previous year. When he departed, he left behind all the books and manuscripts he'd accumulated.

Schwartz returned to Manhattan and registered at the Hotel Dixie, today the Hotel Carter, on West 42nd Street, where he lived as a recluse. Some friends who glimpsed him on the street preferred to maintain their distance, among them Saul Bellow. Bellow later wrote in Humboldt's Gift *(1975) of his Schwartz-like protagonist: "I knew that Humboldt would soon die because I had seen him on the street two months before and he had death all over him. He didn't see me. He was gray stout sick dusty, he had bought a pretzel stick and was eating it. His lunch. Concealed by a parked car, I watched. I didn't approach him. I felt it was impossible . . ."*

Others who tried to be sociable were turned away, including the singer Lou Reed, who had been a protégé of Schwartz's at Syracuse and part of "the Round Table" at The Orange where Schwartz had held court most evenings. In his memoir The Tenants, *William Barrett, professor of philosophy at New York University, recalls a final glimpse of Schwartz in a Greenwich Village restaurant:*

> *For a while his conversation was normal and quiet, but then there burst forth a Delmore I'd never heard, not even in his most agitated moments. He started to*

[28] Atlas p. 372

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rant and rave. I'd always been able to follow the acute zigs and zags of his talk without any effort, but this time I found him incoherent . . .

In time Schwartz left, or was evicted from, the Hotel Dixie and took up residence at the Columbia Hotel at 70 West 46th Street near Sixth Avenue. He spent days in the reading room of the New York Public Library or furiously typing in his room. Evenings were spent in bars such as Cavanaugh's in Chelsea, and enduring insomniac nights and early mornings reading Pilgrim's Progress, *the* Kama Sutra, *the poems of Holderlin, and "pornographic" magazines. About three o'clock a.m. on July 11, 1966, while taking out the garbage from his room, he suffered a heart attack in the hotel hallway.*

His life might have been saved. He lay in the hallway on the fourth floor for over an hour before a resident finally called the desk to report a man "making strange noises" outside his door. The police were called first. They in turn called an ambulance. On the way to Roosevelt Hospital, Delmore Schwartz died.

So out of touch had he been with friends and family, he was not missed for two days. A reporter, "routinely reading over the morgue lists," recognized his name and three days later a two-column obituary and photograph appeared in The New York Times. *It stated Schwartz had spent his last days "in his room typing, and he used to order food from a nearby delicatessen."*

Elizabeth Pollet, who edited his notebooks and journals for publication, described Schwartz's late entries as "indecipherable." A final notebook, found in the Columbia Hotel room by Dwight Macdonald after Schwartz's death, contains the following harrowing lines:

The poisonous world flows into my mouth
Like water into a drowning man's.

—edited by Robert Phillips
selected and annotated by Daniel Kunitz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Donald Hall

The Museum of Clear Ideas or say: Horsecollar's Odes

"We've come to expect . . ."

We've come to expect earthquakes, fires, hurricanes,
and tidal waves from our whitecoated brothers
whose laboratories shed radiation
on land and landscape,

disabling cities. Foresighted citizens
outfit granite arks in Idaho's brown hills,
stocked against flood, famine, pestilence, war, and
hunger of neighbors,

with freeze-dried Stroganoff, bulgur, and Uzis.
Let's remember: Our great-grandfathers holed up
in mountains with pistols and pemmican, their
manhood sufficient,

should they avoid peritonitis and gan-
grene, to perform the mechanic alchemy
which liquified landscape, dirt to nuggets, and
sluiced a state golden.

Let's remember not only the local wars
over claims but a late conflict of siblings
in aristocracy and the stock market,
sharing destruction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We want comfort: Shall we consult Jefferson?
Alas, he's busy inventing the lightbulb
that works without electricity. Franklin?
    He is occupied

obliterating SIN from Webster's project.
If we approach doddering George Washington
he only smiles at us in his foolishness.
    Shall we call upon

Abraham Lincoln for succor? Sob: The Great
Emancipator succumbs to Grant's whiskey.
But, if we return past Jonathan Edwards,
    past Cotton Mather,

to the Israelites of the Mayflower—
who make covenant with Jehovah's promised
wilderness and the manna of Indian
    corn, who stay secure

in Adam's fall and the broken promises
of the remnant—we discover ancestors
appropriate to our lapsarian state:
    Their rage sustains us.

(b)

Or say: When we're sixty
years old we know better
and do less. The things we
know better are antinomian
adventure, sequent despair,
error, self-deception, failure,
and good cheer. No wonder
that we'd prefer, with
the moribund Irishman, to
be "young" and "ignorant."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Winter's asperity liquifies . . ."

Winter's asperity liquifies under the assault of April.
Now the trout fisherman flexes stiff waders;
now cattle and sheep clamber out of barns that kept
them warm all winter;
now the countryman no longer seeks comfort

by sleeping on his Glenwood, for ice has departed the
coldest field.
Under the new moon animal bodies play,
cavorting on tender grasses that the breezes caress and
embrace.
Each morning we gaze at daffodils, closing

our eyes in languor. Soon we will deck ourselves in
the garden's densest
effluence and shuffle to drowse in maple
shade and the shade of birches, convening where soft
mosses are softest
to build with our bodies temples for Venus

as summer suggests: We sigh, we are easy—because
we understand
that we must squeeze every moment: The truest
aphrodisiac is our certain knowledge that we will die:
We sweat,
we pant, we drop our pants whenever we touch

the subject of dying—because dead people rarely
appear happy;
because they want energy; because they lack
desire for each other's bodies. In response to death's
deplorable
likelihood, we bed each other down in spring.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(b)

Or say: In spring (and for that matter in summer, fall,
and winter) each of us dreadfully desires to die.
However, our conventions consider this longing morbid
and in the worst possible taste: Therefore we dress up
in costumes of lust to distract ourselves; we pound
and jab ourselves into each other—we flail, we froth,
our cup runneth over—in order to release endorphins
that, for the moment, relax our lust for oblivion
by substituting oblivion. As the poet said, "Love
and death, love and death: How do you tell them apart?"

"Who's this fellow . . ."

Who's this fellow wearing the aftershave lotion
with the slim figure embracing you, Fidelia,
  in the rose garden beside
    the artificial hill?

I suppose that he's nameless and legion, for whom
you loosen your golden abundant erotic
  hair. For the rest of his life
    he'll weep over this hour,

whimper himself green deploring inconstancy,
make hack metaphors that associate fickle
  seas with storms and dread shipwrecks—
    this same amorous boy

who sighs with pleasure now, credulous of yellow
tresses, loyalty, and unfading loveliness—
  ignoring the Oedipal
    weather of history.

Ridiculous that he suffers this ecstasy
over you! Horsecollar knows, who points morals
  of shipwreck and survival
    as he drips saltwater.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not up to it."

I'm not up to it. Oh, it would require Dante
to tell your story, even Gore Vidal himself
to describe, Professor, the filth and corruption
of your critical maneuvers!

Others drain swamps, you swamp the drains. In
Manhattan,
you leave muddy crocodiles asleep where Elm Street
used to cross Maple; your depraved taste and
judgment
effect this metamorphosis.

Commissioner, how can I sing adequately
of the gross self-seeking that beats to enable
your cardiovascular system? How can I
—pastoral, gentle, good-natured—

recount the conflicts-of-interest and favor
trading that distinguish your abuses of power,
O Eulogist of Whatever Crawls on Twelve Legs?
My petty Muse lacks energy

to reveal feculent praises supplied as blurbs
to be bartered for Guggenheims and Pulitzers.
The major industry of the Scilly Islands
is doing each other's laundry.

(b)

Or say: Ancient Horsecollar, toothless
and seamed as corduroy, sipping brandy
on Montparnasse, answers the *Paris*
Review's question—"What keeps you
going?"—with one word, and a sneer
as venerable as Tutankhamen's: "Revenge!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Let many bad poets . . ."

Let many bad poets praise the Grand Canyon, the
Panama
Canal, the Statue of Liberty, Mount
Hood, the Napa Valley with its products of
fermentation,
Sicily, Connecticut, and themselves.

Some of us spend our whole lives praising Danbury,
New Hampshire,
or Mount Fuji: Praising our places we
praise ourselves while pretending to look outward.
We build Tu Fu's
Chengdu cottage as a shrine for ourselves

in every *Poetry,* by printing reflections, in free verse
without noticeable attention to
linebreaks, on snapshots of the poetic mother-and-father,
in their weird clothes, on vacation, before

the poet was born: How poignant it is, how remarkable
that one's parents were older than oneself!
Then they died: snore. Because I have nothing to say,
and nothing
deeply pitiable to whine over,

I program my poem-processor for irony, malice,
envy, loathing, and the decent pleasure
of breaking anyone's Mont Blanc who disturbs my
solitude.
While others probe an already sore place

with the pick-axes of guilty ululation, I relax
with a good book on the soul's wooden porch,
or, as they advised Amos some ages ago, I eat bread
and prophesy. It happens I predict

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

myself, praising my villa as Horace did, praising Ragged,
  Camilla, Eagle Pond, and Max the dog.
I prophesy the country I invent by shutting the door;
  I praise citizenship in the nation

of myself. You too can withdraw into a granite valley
  defended by the troops of history,
learning, sexual luxury, diligence, and narcissism.
  Just remember: Never knock on this door.

(b)

Or say: If misanthropy sings hymns
in the satirist's chapel, should
he forswear humanity? Despise only
the Timon who walks without crutches.

"Mount Kearsarge shines . . ."

Mount Kearsarge shines with ice; from hemlock branches
snow slides onto snow; no stream, creek, or river
    budges but remains still. Tonight
      we carry armloads of logs

from woodshed to Glenwood and build up the fire
that keeps the coldest night outside our windows.
    Sit by the woodstove, Camilla,
      while I bring glasses of white,

and we'll talk, passing the time, about weather
without pretending that we can alter it:
    Storms stop when they stop, no sooner,
      leaving the birches glossy

with ice and arc'd glittering to rimy ground.
We'll avoid the programmed weatherman grinning
    from the box, cheerful with tempest,
      and take the day as it comes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one day at a time, the way everyone says.
These hours are the best because we hold them close
in our uxorious nation.
Soon we'll walk—when days turn fair

and frost stays off—over old roads listening
for peepers as spring comes on, never to miss
the day's offering of pleasure
for the government of two.

"Mercury, descendant . . ."

Mercury, descendant of Henry Ford's five-
dollar-a-day Model-T factory line,
you educated us and provided means
of exploration,

messenger of adult pleasures that began
at the drive-in movie and continued when
we flew ourselves out of town, winged at the heel,
unnoticed by blue

parents or policemen, to hasten with joy
from public highways onto backroads beside
meadows with your radio playing soft tunes
while we played also.

Aided by ingenious misdirection,
we resisted intimidation from old
gods and new teachers, in order to turn old
ourselves, past sedans

and stationwagons back to the two-seater:
Oh, surely your transport will return again
in the procession of motors following
a sable Lincoln.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The times are propitious . . ."

The times are propitious for fake religions.
Today let's decide which priest, beauty, athlete,
moviestar, or Jungian to celebrate
by electing god.

Hype springs eternal in the human breast. Let's
diversify spiritual options, play
New Age rock, and improvise doubletalk with
Julia, Founder

of the God-of-the-Month Club, who keeps busy
shamaning around in her medicine-man
costume, afterwards to go Sufi dancing
with Pat Robertson

outside the Zen temple just dedicated
to Kali, Martin Luther, and *Orphée,* who
plays for the waltzing of Mithras, Hercules,
and Joseph Campbell

wearing his benign suit. Our bewitching friend
mumbles and invokes, imploring the oak trees
to accept worship—or should we say workshop?
It's literary.

Polytheism pays tribute to singleness
by proclaiming Zeus CEO. Julia
has always found him authoritarian;
if Julia feels

humble toward one god she makes up another,
as her suburban divine rotten boroughs
grant Julia an Olympic Parliament's
perpetual rule.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now with her biorhythm calculator,
organic vitamins, ouija board, Yoga
exercises, Mesmerism, Iroquois shells,
  Obeah routines,

Zen meditation, Tantric sexgames, Shirley
MacLaine, phrenology, Fletcherizing, I
Ching, and crucifix, she's in total control.
  Unless she isn't.

Gibbon published the first volumes of *Decline*
in 1776. When he praised
the Antonine who, although intelligent,
  believed that planets

controlled destinies, he assured Jefferson
that until recently quite a few almost-
intelligent folk believed such idiot
  junk. What sign are we,

Julia? Whatever superstitious trek
you follow today, you'll find a new Tibet
by nightfall tomorrow. Have you learned to mold
  Aztec sugarskulls?

The Apostate rises from his magician's
cave, cobwebbed and fusty, hearing your summons:
to expunge the light of the centuries' wit,
  to bring in his train

a hobgoblin horde of devils and monsters
carrying bronze tridents, disreputable
strongmen, giants, gargoyles, licentious shepherds,
  nymphs, dragons, satyrs,

saints with fake wounds, messengers—the revenant
discredited minor athletes of magic
and bêtise, rabble of nothing, who proclaim:
  "Let there be darkness."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(b)

Or say: The much-esteemed Gibbon and his Virginian
colleagues by cheerful error calculated
that civilization motored a tidy upward turnpike
to culminate in the city of Guess Who's worldly
intelligence. But from 300 A.D., for a millennium,
every daughter knew less than her mother, every
son less than his father. Now, as we dispute
over the exact moment when we engaged this autobahn
downward again—hurtling in a tinny Cadillac fueled
by idleness, greed, and superstition—our great-
grandfathers (the ones who could read and write)
drape themselves white to hear our diminished
chicken-cackle language in the parliament of fools.

"Old woman whom I . . ."

Old woman whom I remember beautiful
and young, I who am still older recollect
  words that shame me: Sink my abusive
    words under the Pacific Ocean.

Nothing is so ruinous as revenge's
rage—not whiskey, not the imagination,
  not love of country. In rage's house
    nothing rules but rage, and the waters

cannot drown it nor the winds blow it away
nor the fires burn it down. In our human minds
  ferocities gather and enlarge
    that we attempt to call inhuman:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The starved lion's hungry fury as he tears
the antelope resides in us: These rages
  destroyed Socrates and Stalingrad
    together, Masada and Emma

Bovary and Troy. Lion men burn houses
with their bushes and gardens until cities
  become cinder heaps that stink of meat.
    When I was forty animals walked

inside me. I was their cage, and when the gate
swung open I swung it. My lions loosened
  blood in the suburbs. I wrote those words
    to tear you with the five claws of rage.

It was love that grew eyeteeth, not for lovebites;
it was love that made war. What other destroys
  so thoroughly as love does? Revenge
    and destruction are love's two faces.

(b)

Or say: Yes, fucking you was terrific fun
for several months. When you rolled over,
I never knew *what* would roll over. But when
you dumped me, Fidelia, I wasn't finished
with you. When old Horsecollar apologizes
for intemperate words uttered in impetuous
middle-age, be certain that a mummified
thug crawls from its bog with a gasoline can
and matches for the house still smoldering.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When the fine days . . ."

When the fine days migrate east from Ohio,
climbing Vermont's greenest mountains and fording
the Connecticut at White River
Junction, our small meadows take relief

from inversions and July's lamentable
heat. You and I hike in amiable air
up-mountain on logging roads—our dog
Max leading us, bouncing, looking back

with mild impatience, making sure we follow—
and kneel taking joy of tiny red blossoms
in moss. Here are no snakes to beware;
here the shy black bear conceals himself;

and the glory of creation loosens our
spirits into appropriate surrender.
Looking down past a clearing we fill
with the fullness of the valley's throat,

where the slow cattle grind the abundant grass
and their laboring stomachs turn green to white;
where the fat sheep graze without budging,
like soft white boulders. Now Max settles

alert, his nostrils twitching to read calm air.
Let us descend, Camilla, to the long white
house that holds love and work together
and play familiar music on each

other's skin. Today we won't worry about
weather, depression, or war; about bad luck
for our labors; about heart attacks
or metastasis to the liver.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Praise Mammon-Mazda . . ."

Praise Mammon-Mazda that smartly entertains us
day and night, bringing a flat world into our eyes
  and living rooms without stink
    or terror: stainless bloodstains.

Girls, pray at pink altars to the hairless goddess;
bless the petro-divinity of your heroes,
  boys, while the whole family
    kneels at the shrine erected

by money's priests that commune to consume our
                                hours;
bless CBS, NBC, ABC, and for
  a monthly fee bless fifty
    channels of wafer-cable.

In return for our faithfulness, we are given
the Paradise of eternal distraction. Let
  other countries riot and
    starve: We'll die watching them die.

"We explore grief's . . ."

We explore grief's borders, boundaries of mourning
and lamentation, wild cries and unending tears,
when the unexpected and unacceptable
  death happens. Henry King, teach us

to grieve with gratitude, who mourned for your
                                young wife
in a Christian elegy. It is our habit
to continue by daydream to contradict death,
  so that continually we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imagine our friend smiling to hear our stories
or taking pleasure in some piece of good fortune
until her death leaps out of the corner again
to jeer at us: *No, no, you don't!*

The whole village weeps. Where shall we take our
pleasures
for validation? Houses and farms and hamlets
mourn her absence, and no one more than Camilla
who studied, watching her, the craft

of growing old with dignity and amusement.
Still we dream to whisper: "The coast is clear. Please
come
out! This underground business has lasted too long:
Relent. Relent. Relent. Relent."

(b)

Or say: All tears
weep for the weeper.
The tissue that dries
our eyes is a clear
understanding that this
disappearance we
complain of will drop
oblivion's lid
over us soon enough.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I celebrate myself . . ."

I celebrate myself. It's intelligent
to compound one's natural ability
by hard work and luck, don't all of us
agree? I sing in praise of Horsecollar,

complacently, without fear of murderous
rivals. I sing to display my Alcaics
and my nobility of spirit:
I praise friends engaged in the same project

and implore the Muses that have favored me
to set resplendent laurels on the heads of
Flaccus, Camilla, and Arbogast:
"Parnassus affords adequate housing."

(b)

Or say: Mania like despair
is doubtless useful to poets
but grossly unreliable
as an index to reality:
Horsecollar, if you don't fear
murderous rivals, better
cringe in a safehouse under
some Mickey Mouse pseudonym.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Arbogast, can you call . . ."

Arbogast, can you call to mind that night when
you and I, engaged in some disputation,
broke wineglasses on each other's heads?
We resembled passionate Englishmen

then, rather than the correct, upright, pious
New England poets we intended to be.
Now we become *mature,* don't we now?
Grapes contribute to civilization

in the tradition of reasonable joy
as we learned in our prepschool years long ago,
among the young imperialists
against whom we measured our excellence.

What's this? You tell me to pipe down and drink up?
Suppose you try talking without slurs, and *then*
give me orders. OK, I won't speak
of your fifty years; instead, I'll question

your reasons for complaining: What's wrong with you?
What is it that you want that you can't have? Oh,
I bet you're lovesick again. Shocking!
Will you tell the object of your desire?

To be nympholeptic again—at your age!
I despair of detaching you from raptures
of misery; you seem to enjoy
Circe's sty . . . But it is Penelope's!

(b)

Or say: If a friendship of decades can survive
the madness of old age, it can survive
murder, treachery, and even, possibly, another's success.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sabina, who explored . . ."

Sabina—who explored internal continents for decades
of poetry, bourbon, and night—moulders
in a patch of Idaho far from her Vermont. For thirty
years she made poems out of her troubles

and places—out of Middlebury, West Los Angeles, and
Pocatello—poems that stay alive
years after her early death. But Sabina was born to die
like her poetic mothers and fathers,

like the sisters and brothers of our more ordinary lives
and would-be making. Even the great ones?
Maybe great ones especially die. We the still-surviving
belittle ourselves at the funerals

of genius that offered us pause. We understand that
we will
also die, but claim, or wish to believe,
that women and men who appear to stop time by
their products
never depart entirely from being.

Nonetheless, Sabina disintegrates in her bare
graveyard—
as much as airline pilots whose planes crash,
or sailors who drown, or the greater number of us
who stop
breathing and turn blue in attended beds.

•

When Sabina is remembered, in ten or a hundred years,
lovers and poets will visit her grave
where the Idaho dead farm their acreage. And when
I die
(Horsecollar brings up another's death

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in order to consider his own) I wish and suppose that
my bones will disintegrate at the edge
of Proctor Cemetery under pinetrees, by ferns, with
pale
birches hovering near. After a few

years Camilla will settle alongside, if as seems likely
we die in bed at Eagle Pond rather
than spiralling seven miles into the Pacific from holes
in airplanes or sweeping from a deck

off the coast of Maine. Possibly pious descendants will
plant
a rose bush there. If others wish to pray
for these bones, Horsecollar thanks them gratefully
from the bottom
of his precariously-beating heart.

(b)

Or say: Good master Horsecollar
At Mary Hitchcock and in terror
Removed a carcinoma, D.V.
Timor mortis conturbat me.

Sabina died ten years ago.
Flaccus endures, Death's sworn foe,
As Marvin burns melanoma away.
Timor mortis conturbat me.

Kim died of the cure. My old teacher
Inhaled a carton of lung cancer
And each generation learns to die.
Timor mortis conturbat me.

Bill was the first: He was run over;
Glaucus leapt underearth for cover.
Great ruth it were that it should be.
Timor mortis conturbat me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(c)

Or perhaps say:
Praise self-pity.
If it were not
for copious
available
deposits of
this indulgence,
doubtless old men
would engage no
feelings at all.

"Flaccus, Camilla . . ."

Flaccus, Camilla, Decius, Arbogast:
Do we instigate our lives or suffer them?
Tanaquil, did you make yourself up
out of whole cloth or from reading *Plotto?*

It is less wearing, and less time-consuming,
to daydream adventures than to run through them
as if we galloped among land-mines.
What else is literature for, besides

avoidance of life? (Whatever we intend
by "life" this week.) Books are more manageable
than griefs, so marry a book; follow
invented pages back into childhood

where we become more charming rather than less,
where our soft skin grows rosy and less wrinkled,
where all things, especially desires,
remain safely (and merely) potential.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

" 'Go write a poem . . .' "

"Go write a poem about it." Dutiful
Horsecollar, hastening to obey, invokes
the male Muse and genius of Parnassus:
"Peter Mark Roget,

"breathe-in for this inarticulate maker
of the temporary verb; supply language
as he makes up strophes fit to be counted
Parnassian Song.

"Figure him help from Brooklyn, from Cumberland
Street's wiry spinster if not the yawpmaster;
not the campiest ocean but syllabic
exactitude, O

numerical testudo of Athena!"
By administration of your amplitude,
Horsecollar counts on his eleven fingers
beautiful numbers.

(b)

Or say: Dutiful numbers
multiply numbers of rage.
Horsecollar affects this
Byzantine dialect with
the *ressentiment*
endemic to age, lifting
an eyebrow—he might
explain—superciliously.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When the goddess . . ."

When the goddess Fortuna removes her mask
she becomes the Ayatollah Khomeini:
  We are hostages to Fortune
    whether we live lucky in Loma

Linda or superior in sin, homeless
in Arcadia or ten Cambodians
  to a room the size of a closet.
    We think by magic; by this magic

we avoid thinking. Atheists address prayers
to the pantheon as they sit in airport
  snack bars with vodka at eight A.M.,
    and as the overtaxed bus struggles

along the runway hold their breath, their eyes closed,
to keep wavery wings in place by voodoo.
  Oh, gangsters retailing crack cocaine,
    mothers watching their children to school,

infantrymen carrying their gas masks as they
advance into Kuwaiti deserts behind
  tanks in the battle to liberate
    petroleum, tyrants whose firebombs

burn the hill tribes, each tyrant's aged mother,
the mothers of the starving tribes, the rebels
  who gather to kill the same tyrant,
    and *their* mothers—all cross damp fingers.

If we complain that Fortune is changeable
we may attend on Necessity instead,
  also female, whose chief attribute
    is absolute unchangeableness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Necessity widows the Queen and orphans
the beggar's daughter. Necessity differs
from Fortune by tense: We don't expect
to prevent what's already happened.

Necessity preserved Caesar when he struck
Englishmen at the edge of the universe.
Necessity protected our troops
waiting in Saudi Arabia

for the battle that turned out to be slaughter.
By technology's valor and by valor's
dollar, without piety we rule
the universe of central heating.

(b)

Or say: We bow to Luck, constructing
chapels of superstition to evade
holiness and worship that terrify us
in fragments of Christmas and Easter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Welcome back home . . ."

Welcome back home, Libo. Exiled
among confederates you lived too far away
too long. Tonight we celebrate
your return to the crimson city of Cambridge.

Drinking Samuel Adams Ale
we party all night, singing and dancing, turning
the clumsy brick streets boisterous
in accord with lively Puritan tradition.

Drusilla with her yards of hair
waltzes until she wears a hole in the dancefloor.
Kimberly, who drinks like a Finn,
embraces us with general avidity.

Colonial sparrows warble
in maples over our heads. Roses that bloomed once
bloom again, peonies fire off,
and we roister all night under fortunate stars.

All night, Libo dancing checks out
Drusilla sideways: so lavishly beautiful,
and so dazzled by her new man
that she clings to him as ivy clings to oaktrees.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I, too, dislike . . ."

I, too, dislike it—the mannerism of plain,
natural, or idiomatic language
McPoets go in for. Horsecollar prefers
chatting in Latin,

"Iowa delenda est," *par exemple.*
Squish the demotic underfoot, Arbogast.
When you take up syntax and semicolons,
then show me your stuff.

(b)

Or say: Rain on the weatherman who announces that "we may experience shower activity" while others claim that "it looks like rain"—and Horsecollar grumbles about "pluviosity." Now Libo disappears from the pages of his existence, as void as Sabina or as Tu Fu who composes and decomposes together with Camilla, Glaucus, *atque* Fidelia of syllabic Oedipal fantasy. Horsecollar occupies his mornings with a chisel, concentrating his stylus on language, cutting square letters into stone, to avoid thinking about aging, death, sexual loss, the countryside's vanishing, replacement of affection by greed, betrayals of love, and disappearance of the good mothers and sisters, brothers and fathers into dirt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Hunger Artist by Franz Kafka: a story

Daniel Stern

We don't have time enough to be ourselves. All we have time for is to be happy.

—Camus

We don't have time enough to be ourselves or to be happy. All we have time enough for is our work. And not enough for that. That's what counts!

—Brandauer

Brandauer had Tuna Fish for lunch every day of the nine years I knew him. Sometimes on rye toast, sometimes on white bread, sometimes with a Coke, sometimes with a small glass of milk. Not a full-size glass: the half sizes kids drink from. It took him about twelve minutes and he was ready to go back to work.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We met the year my second book was published—the one written with vanishing ink. I was also working as a rep for a production company which specialized in the fancy avant-garde commercials which were then in style. That was the year applause began to come to Brandauer, late and sudden. When it grew to a crescendo a few years later, while nothing much was happening in what we laughingly called my literary career, he felt a statement was called for. "Don't get too excited," he said. "And don't envy me. Coming at this time in my life, these honors are like rocks falling on my head." He was fifty-six, tall and lean as a panther. A grizzled Jewish Panther of the writing jungle. I didn't believe his disclaimer then; nobody did. Later it was another matter.

This late-bloomed success was the main reason we met. Brandauer had come out of his cage, for a time. This never-photographed, never-interviewed, slowly famous, invisible comic artist of rigor and denial had actually agreed to teach a course at a Creative Writing Workshop. And, as if one wonder were not enough, he also agreed to be interviewed.

The setting for these extraordinary events was to be a small but serious Writers Conference near Seattle. Having been tapped by *The Paris Review* to do the long-refused interview, I sat in on his class. The fortunate few were early, without doubt a first for *them,* notebooks out, necks craned upwards—Brandauer was six feet tall and thin and looked a little like Abraham Lincoln if Abraham Lincoln had been of eastern European Jewish descent.

Everyone sitting around the long oval table waited, watching this man who had emerged from a dozen years at hard labor in solitary confinement, five in the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn and seven in Genoa, Italy, learning, as one critic wrote, to make sentences walk, dance and sing. There were three well-documented years in France, as well, where he'd lived in a stone house on a hill in a tiny perched village near Avignon. But there too he had mostly stayed in his stone room, performing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his self-appointed task as the ballet master of the modern English sentence.

That's right—no wife, no children, all sorts of friends, but no family who could claim time away from his mission. Or so everyone thought at the time. Given this well-publicized first surfacing, the class's expectations were naturally high. If Brandauer knew this, he wasn't letting on. He picked up the small, green-covered book of stories by Kafka and began to read: " 'A Hunger Artist,' a story by Franz Kafka. *During these last decades the interest in professional fasting has markedly diminished . . . At one time the whole town took a lively interest in the Hunger Artist. It used to pay very well to stage such great performances under one's own management, but today that is quite impossible. We live in a different world now.*" In a short time it became terribly and comically clear that all Brandauer would teach, in what was advertised as his Creative Writing Workshop, was one fourteen-page story by Kafka. No student self-expression, no handing in of manuscripts to be criticized by the classmates, no memorialized encouraging comments scribbled in the margins by the Master.

What he did give to the students was an eloquent overview of a story about a man whose art was fasting; who practiced it in a cage, setting world records for taking little food sometimes, no food other times, for days, weeks and finally many years—on his own and later in a circus. For a time, since the art of fasting itself had a large audience, he was famous, successful—even as his ribs stuck through his skin. Later, the art falls out of fashion and the hunger artist dies, by now, utterly forgotten. Into his cage they put a young panther; they bring him the food he likes . . . *and the joy of life streamed with such ardent passion from his throat . . .*"

The kids were stunned. When Brandauer read the end in which the dying Hunger Artist whispers to the Overseer that the audience should not admire his fasting . . . *Because I have to fast, I can't help it.* And explains, finally, *Because . . .* and here Brandauer hunched down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and spoke the Artist's last words in a hoarse whisper, *. . . I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.*

He was a smash. The young people all around me were applauding, thrilled. They had clearly forgotten, in the excitement of the moment, that Brandauer had not even read a story of his own, let alone one of theirs; had not told them how they should write or even how he wrote, himself, except by implication. It was a subtle, allusive, brilliant performance. Several faculty members had invited themselves in, stood in the back, and they were going wild, too. The single exception was the striking young woman who sat next to me, shoving impatient hands through her long red hair. She never took her eyes off Brandauer. Either she was extraordinarily fair or her exquisite face was pale with some emotion I couldn't figure out. Actually, she looked the way people in books might look when "pale with anger."

While she stared at him and I stared at her, Brandauer made it clear but not pleasant to the students that *all* he would deal with was the way the story was made. No fancy hermaneutics; just how something is made.

"Look how Kafka has the audience *itself* take an active part in the Hunger Artist's dramatic fasting presentation. There are casual onlookers in front of his cage, but there are also *relays of permanent watchers selected by the public—usually butchers,* Kafka tells us—and they are to watch to make sure the Artist doesn't have some resource to secret nourishment. With two words, *usually butchers,* Kafka introduces humor into this grim business."

"Critics," one student called out.

Brandauer paused; he patted a pencil against the wire frame of his eyeglasses. He did not look at the waiting student. He smiled, as at a private joke. Then he proceeded: "Later, however," he said, "just before the end, not only is he not being scrutinized, but no one even notices the starving Hunger Artist; he's hidden beneath

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

layers of straw, until an Overseer notices what seems to be an empty cage and pokes around until he discovers the artist almost dead from his fast." So much for interpretations and analogies.

Brandauer must have sensed the restlessness, almost a confusion in the air. "This is the way we will work, here," he said, bending over the table on which lay the text. Tall and skinny he arched his back, one half of a pair of parentheses, and explained that the only way he knew to learn to write was to read. So, in the remaining sessions they would read and reread and reread again this small story by Kafka. "We will reinvent this strange little story by one of the strangest writers who ever lived—and then you'll go on to invent your own, that's what counts. I'm sorry if you expected more or different. I can't give more or different. This is the only way I know." It was the first time I heard that phrase from him—"that's what counts." It was not the last.

Outside, on the slippery steps of the conference hall, Brandauer and I made arrangements to meet for the interview. The inevitable Seattle drizzle huddled us under umbrellas. I scribbled his address.

"Come at four. We'll do two hours, then I've invited some people for dinner."

"I'll bring the wine."

"Don't bring anything. I have a bottle."

Suddenly there was a presence between our two umbrellas. The young girl with the angry gaze, my classroom neighbor, stood there. She had forgotten her umbrella but had brought the gaze, intact.

"Professor Brandauer . . ." she said.

"Mister," he said. "I don't profess anything. I'm just a writer."

She pushed a bundle of manuscripts towards him. It was dauntingly large enough to be secured by a fat rubber band. Water streamed down her forehead past large blue, unblinking eyes. I couldn't help thinking she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked like a water nymph in some Bernini fountain in Rome; a beauty.

"Can I lend you my umbrella," Brandauer said, an old-fashioned gentleman. He was carefully not looking at the papers she held.

"No," she said. "You can read my stories."

"They're going to be soaking wet." He moved to bring her into the protected circle but she moved away, impatient.

"I came up from Newport News . . ." She paused as if searching for the strongest argument she could make. Indeed, I would have guessed even further south than Virginia, going by the music below the rage in the words. ". . . just to get your comments on my stories."

"You heard what I . . ."

"This is my life, Mister Brandauer," she said. "I have read everything you've . . ."

"Only four books," he murmured. But anger had made her deaf to Brandauer's mild irony.

". . . and I didn't come all this soaking way to hear what's his name. I came to hear what you think about my—my—" I was afraid she was going to say her life, again; I'd seen Brandauer sort of wince the first time.

"What's *your* name," Brandauer said.

"Penelope Anne Golden. You *will* read me, then."

I was impressed by the "read me." She couldn't have been more than twenty-four and she already felt there was a "me" to read.

"It wouldn't be f-f-f-fair to the others. Th-th-th-that's what counts."

It was the first time I'd heard him stammer. He owned one; but like the rest of his inventory, he used it sparingly.

"I don't give a damn about the others," Penelope Anne Golden said. "I came here for you!" She licked the rain from her lips while her stone glance stayed on Brandauer's face.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Miss Golden, you don't understand . . ."

"I don't have to," she said and backing off a little, threw the rubber-band–bound sheaf of papers at Brandauer. She threw it underhand, a softball throw and Brandauer had to drop his umbrella to catch it. He stood there, like a statue of himself, Penelope Anne Golden's life in his hands, rain blinding his eyeglasses.

What I remember most about that first evening at the tiny apartment Brandauer had rented in downtown Seattle was how lavishly we three dinner guests poured out conversation, laughter and information. The other two were two professors of American Studies—married to each other and to Brandauer's work. We shared the subtle feeling of being the three people in the world, that night, privileged to be in the presence. I entertained us all with a re-creation of the scene in the rain with the lovely southern rebel. That started a sort of anarchic evening of excessive laughter and noisy talk; not the sort of wildness Brandauer was used to.

Before the others arrived, he had carefully measured out his steps around the little folding table, setting down the napkins, measuring the distance between knife and plate, neatly parsing out everything else: the wine in the small, over-decorated, hardware-store glasses, the lean anecdotes he told, the Chicken Casserole he'd cooked, the portion sizes just enough, no more, no less.

He was so serious! When he joined in the joke telling with a story about a Japanese businessman returning home from a trip to an unfaithful wife who had slept with a Jewish man, we laughed and Brandauer laughed. But by departing for a moment from his habitual grave bearing, he gave the joking weight. He was like a Japanese visitor, without the language, trying to join in a lightheartedness he did not quite understand but longed to experience.

During dinner he continued to measure out the food and wine as if we were marooned on a desert island and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had to be sure to make the rations would last. He'd told me, "I have a bottle" and that's exactly what he had, one bottle of wine for the four of us, not a drop more. You felt he didn't understand why anyone would want more than was enough. And what was enough was clear. His conversation, too, was carefully proportioned—he spoke in short, clear, ironic phrases with not one stammer. And, at one point, when the laughter and noisy commentary got out of hand, loud and boisterous, Brandauer pounded his hand on the table for quiet. A God of large and small universes, he was accustomed to being able to control them; a master of where to place the period, he got his quiet along with a certain astonishment.

About halfway through the interview session before dinner, he suddenly said, "That girl . . . what did you think?"

"I think you're on the spot," I said. "You and Kafka, both. She's one of those tough southern cookies. She expected personal attention and you gave her Kafka."

"I like her intensity," he said. And he quoted Yeats to me—something about lust and rage attending old age . . . I said, "How old are you?"

"How much do you weigh?" he said. He'd watched me settle and resettle myself on the couch as I fiddled with the tape recorder. He watched everybody and everything, better at asking than answering questions.

"Too damned much."

And I told him how my second marriage had broken up because in one of my cycles of voracious overeating, I had reached over to my wife's plate, at the Peking Gardens, and started eating from it. Everyone else at the table thought it was mildly amusing, a weird little action. To *her* it meant the marriage was over, it meant I didn't give a damn about anybody or anything except my own hopeless hungers.

"Second wife? You're pretty young."

"I'm on my third."

"Sounds like courses in a meal."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is my life we're talking, here," I said. "Don't turn it into another Brandauer metaphor."

"My life," he murmured. "That's what Penelope Anne said. Everybody seems to have this *life* they own." He said it mournfully. I didn't know him well enough to say, it wasn't like a car you bought or didn't buy—that he, too, must own a life. But it wasn't that clear.

We finished the interview a few days later and I left Seattle to go back to New York, looking for my next job and some fresh ways to patch up the various tears my marriage had developed. I left without finding out what happened to Penelope Anne Golden and her rain-soaked plea for personal literary attention.

I did not see Brandauer again for a year and a half. He was back in his lair, making sentences with which to make stories and making stories in which to nest his sentences. I was busy running around looking for some happiness. I was always able to find *some,* so I could never either renounce the habit or conquer it. I started a magazine designed to appeal to the restless paperback publishing industry, for a time, then did Public Relations for a Ballet Company that spun off from the American Ballet Theater. You get the idea; things that kept me busy but could never be confused with a real career.

Brandauer wrote a letter: "I read your first novel *Skydancer.* It is strongly imagined and seriously comic—but is insufficiently crafted so the spirit dies halfway through, leaving the reader with a big chunk of inanimate flesh to deal with. Perhaps you are too scattered to give your craft enough attention. All these different activities." He closed his unexpected letter with a typical Brandauer trick: two quotations without their sources. *Don't forget,* he wrote, *"Life isn't everything." And in any case, "It's best seen through a single window." This last—that's what counts.*

What the hell did he want? He certainly did not think I could follow him into the compression of despairing images into wildly comic characters which, during these next years, made him as famous as Beckett or Malamud—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to whom, along with Kafka, he was most often compared. Or into his solitude to become a saint of art. Him and his "that's what counts"—counting up our everlasting pluses and minuses. And what the hell would he do with the sum if he finally arrived at it? In the language of his youth his speed was seventy-eight, mine was thirty-three and a third and often a whirring, laser-spun CD. But I loved his songs. My affection was not unrequited: He invited me to join him at a Writer's Conference at the University of Arizona in June.

I arrived in Tucson by a series of disastrously late planes. Which is why I missed Brandauer's class and drove up to find him standing, surrounded by students in a shimmer of sunshine. I got out of my car and a wall of shaking heat hit my face. Brandauer was the only one who wore a jacket and tie, and he sweated passionately everywhere you could see: his shirt collar wet and limp, his blue tie smeared and wet, his handkerchief mopping eyes and half-bald forehead.

The group thinned out and there was Brandauer with the Angry Young Woman of a year ago: Penelope Whatever-her-name-was. It was the Seattle tableau all over, but instead of rain a monstrous, debilitating fried egg of a sun.

I was so startled to see her that I slowed my approach. I watched them through a shimmering horizon-haze of crackling, dry heat. It was like a mirage must be, except it didn't look pleasant.

"You're just changing names and places, Penny," I heard Brandauer say. "Sometimes the imagination needs a push."

My God, I thought in that hallucinatory hot wind, a year later and they're still arguing. Though I did note the "Penny." The argument, and who knew what else, had become personal.

"*You* need a push," she said. "Get you out of your damned Kafka-land."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They began to walk. I followed, not wanting to interrupt.

"I'm not telling you how or what to do. But a series of sexual encounters do not make a work of fiction."

"That's because I'm a woman. How about D.H. Lawrence?"

"How about sitting in the shade? I'm fainting from the heat."

"Pricks are okay but Cunts are not proper literary material, is that it?" It was the precise moment to interrupt. Now or never and just in time. Between the two of us we got Brandauer into my air-conditioned Toyota. Tucson in June at 11:30 AM: Heat stroke was not unthinkable. We put him to bed in the air-conditioned studio apartment rented for him by the university.

"I should never have come out," he said. "I can't handle you p-p-p-p-people."

I was surprised, again, by the stammer; surprised, too, that he included *me* in his soft, exhausted impeachment.

"Okay," Penny said. "He's right." She paused to soak up her second margarita. "My youth is so full of weird sex stuff that I can't make head or tail out of it. But writing stories is the only way I know to get it all straight—if I don't then I'm cooked."

"Right now, *he's* cooked," I said. "And what do you mean your youth?"

"I'm twenty-four, honey. In Virginia twenty-four is a mature woman." It came out *woeman.* And, in spite of that lovely, lofty white brow and bright red lips, her "honey" was so strongly flavored it shriveled my scrotum.

I took refuge in questions of fact. "How did you get Brandauer to comment on your stories? He was so firm about what he would and wouldn't do in the class."

"He insisted I drop out of the class." Penny said. "Dis-enroll."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I swear I had guessed the answer in advance; I was getting to know Brandauer in spite of himself.

"It was the only way to be fair to the others, he said. I became an auditor and he'd read my stories and go over them with me over lunch."

"Tuna Fish," I said. "Every day."

"How did you know?"

"So you won."

"I lost," she said miserably. "I wanted to exorcise my crazy adolescence by turning it into fiction. He poisoned my hope." She was something. No one I knew but Penny could have said, with a straight face, *He poisoned my hope.* She rummaged in a giant tote bag and out came a notebook. "Here's what he said—it was so awful I had to write it down." She read, like a schoolgirl reciting a lesson, *Art is not ecology. We don't need to conserve the life you've lived and lost—we need a new life from you . . . one you can imagine but probably can't have. We want imagination not biography. That's what counts.*

She threw the book down and then surprised me by dropping her head on her folded arms. For a full minute she wept. I didn't know what to do so I reached across the table and touched her cheek. My hand came away wet. It felt too intimate. But it stopped the flood. She flared up again: "So I said, *How about Proust?* And he said, *How about you?*"

"Why do you care what he thinks so much?" I said hopelessly.

"Because he knows. You know how he's always saying about this or that—that's what counts? Well, sometimes I think he really knows what counts, that he has that gift. I didn't mean what I said about Pricks and Cunts and all that. He's not full of shit. He may be the only one who's not." Over a Tex-Mex dinner ordered on impulse I tried to distract her. No use.

"How do you make a living in between Brandauer encounters?" I asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sell books in a little store downtown Newport News. That's where I first found him."

"Him?"

"His books. When I heard he was going to teach—I grabbed my stories and lit out for the territory. But he wouldn't teach. Just talk about this one crazy story." She poured a ton of ketchup over everything and laughed. "Dug my own grave." she said. "You're a kind man to listen to my troubles." She spoke with that formal prose southerners seem to be born with.

Later we were less formal. I was too close to her, and she was a melange of smells; some kind of flowery perfume on her neck, fragrant gin on her breath and ketchup on her fingers. Also, the wide blue eyes made things pretty skittish. Except for Brandauer. We'd made the mistake of calling to make sure he wasn't dead of heat stroke. He wasn't, but then he knew Penny and I were together and it smelled like a betrayal. The night's mission was aborted.

Already I could hear him saying: *"Her eyes—you wanted to make love to her because of her wide, beautiful eyes—is that a person, a human being, their eyes, wide or close together? A human being as parts?"* The Brandauer eye went right to the heart of things. Butcher of values, he left no fat on issues—only the hearts of matters were good enough for him to sell. He respected his customers. Okay, call them his readers. Call them the audience.

Finally, I understood Brandauer's exasperated stammering wrap-up of Penny and me: *I should never have left. I can't handle you p-p-p-p-people . . .* I didn't like it, but I understood it. Coming out into the world had left the poor bastard open to everybody from Penny and her all-important "life" to writing groupies from all over. There was one young man whose name had been Wilbur Jonas until he became a convert to Orthodox Judaism. He changed his name to Chaim and brought his unfinished novel all the way from the wealth of Shaker

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Heights, Cleveland, by bus, to Fargo, North Dakota, to hear Brandauer talk about "A Hunger Artist." He had converted from Jewish Middle-class Agnosticism to Orthodoxy. His beard was so long he looked like his own great-grandfather. Brandauer gave him special attention. He treated him as if he were some sort of sacred monster.

We were *all* his problems. I who wanted to devour all the life and time there was, and was unable to learn the mysterious Brandauer alchemy of making caterpillars out of butterflies, questions out of answers; Chaim, who wanted to find the Talmudic tradition in new fiction; Penny and the other Pennys who were busy with the sacred matters of personal experience which drew his contempt.

Sometimes I got sick of him.

"What's so special about your buddy the shtetl kid," I said, irritated. "The Rabbi Nachman of Cleveland. He wouldn't even eat your Tuna Fish, brought his own food? *You* don't believe that stuff," I said. "Why do you give that kid so much leeway?"

"I like Chaim." he said. "I like his choice of names. It affirms Life."

I shrugged. "He wants to bomb Arabs. Some affirmer of life."

"He's fervent," Brandauer said. "That's what counts."

Those years of his coming out were my pendulum years. I swung like a pendulum from Diet Centers to eating binges, from reducing farms to Food City, no doubt making a shambles of my endocrinological system. Jobs were the same. Like Tarzan on his vines I swung my way through the jungle of employment, never staying put very long.

Women, too, were included in this cycle of appetites. At least two of them had wonderfully adhesive skin, that is they stuck to my life. Others had skin as smooth as a mind without memory and soon became part of the past. One of them, Sybil, became my fourth wife. I wanted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brandauer to be the Best Man but I was afraid he already was, and skipped the invitation.

One November, at a conference in Fargo, North Dakota, Brandauer told me, "You're a feverish man. A cooler temperature would be more productive." I allowed myself an intimate moment with the Master.

"The fever is not the problem," I said. And I tried to make him understand how it was always the matter at hand, whatever it was, which heated me up—a lovely woman who promised understanding and pleasure, not necessarily in that order; a *poulet à l'estragon avec moutarde et endives;* and that fine literary moment when the word *and* joins the actions of two characters perfectly. All were equal in me.

Brandauer gazed at me in spectacled despair. His silhouette seemed more fragile than ever; his cheeks were sinking inwards, signs of age or loss of weight, I couldn't tell.

"That's only good for somebody who's going to live forever," he said. "I haven't met one yet. The rest of us have to choose."

"How about a walk," I said, desperately.

"This is North Dakota. It's five degrees outside."

"Ah," I said. "Yes. As usual I forgot."

The following summer we met at the Bennington Conference. I was in my brief phase of smoking good cigars—delicious, slow-smoking, fragrant Panatelas made by Upmann in Havana, shipped, legally, to Switzerland to a man named Gross, who then shipped them to me, illegally, in a box marked *Swiss Cigars: Gift Under Twenty-five Dollars.*

"Is it worth all that trouble," Brandauer asked.

"Absolutely."

"I think maybe the trouble is part of the pleasure. It makes a big deal out of a small joy."

To throw him off the scent I told him about Hemingway's comment that you had to plan your pleasures, work

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at them, otherwise they wouldn't happen. Everything else will happen anyway, work, obligations, but not pleasures, unless you planned for them.

I leaned back satisfied with having scored. Brandauer stood up, said, "It goes vice versa, too," and went home to his desk. As if to prove him right, I wasted that entire day in pointless phone calls, switching vacation plans, while he wrote a page and a half.

A couple of years later I was asked to fill in at the last minute, at a winter Conference in Boulder, Colorado. I was working at a new job: Writer/Producer of trailers for Monster Movies. You know, bite-sized smorgasbords designed to make children and certain minority groups—the primary monster-lovers—hungry for the movie itself. I needed the money to pay for Alimony. The Divorce from Sybil had turned into the usual horror movie and I'd put on thirty pounds out of misery.

But Brandauer was going to be in Boulder, so I cleared my schedule. When I arrived, there he was, small, green-covered Modern Library edition of the *Selected Kafka* stories in hand.

In the interim he had won the Pulitzer Prize for his *Collected Stories* and a National Book Award for a new novel. The novels were getting shorter and shorter. You could hardly tell them from the stories, which were also getting smaller. I was eager to see him. But more eager to have *him* see *me.* I'd just dropped forty-seven pounds at the Pritikin Center in Florida. It had cost all my extra cash—but I was proud of the exhibition of will.

There was a foot of snow everywhere. We met for lunch in some Western Inn–type place with a fireplace, and a moosehead on the wall. They featured Steaks and Venison, but I knew what Brandauer was up for. I took perverse pleasure in ordering even less. What's less than Tuna Fish on white toast and a cup of black coffee? It wasn't easy, but I scrounged up an assorted vegetable plate. That got his attention. But he made no comment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I brought you a present," I told him. "It's a poem. I wrote it on eight hundred calories a day, at Pritikin. It's called: 'The Hunger Artist.' "

It was a long son of a bitch but he seemed to pay special attention to the last two stanzas.

Out of the fleshly fabrication
Appears an honesty of skin.
In the hungry, human situation
The gotten grace is always thin.

The body less than fills the eye,
The flesh, a tissue shield.
Bare bones beneath a cannibal sky:
Shape is fate revealed.

"It's not *'The* Hunger Artist,' it's *'A* Hunger Artist.' " He folded the gift-poem carefully in four parts and put it in his wallet. "The article is crucial. He's a special case."

Not a word about my poem, a poem as personal to me as my gut.

We stormed the snow, a blast of white wind in our faces, and walked to the parking lot. I had to shout to be heard.

"Okay," I said, off-balance as only he could throw me off, *"The—A—*My God . . . I've heard you read that story in eight cities to students dying to learn how to write their own stories . . ."

"Are you finished with your new book?"

"No—I've been gearing up for this new job. And the divorce took it out of me."

"Ah," he said. There was nothing more devastating than a Brandauer "Ah."

"Do you like making these commercials you work at?"

As if confessing something shameful I said: "I do, yes. It's fun, it's easy and it's good money."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He fiddled with the lock to his car.

"It may be frozen," I said. "Let me try."

He paused a long time and said, "I could never handle the world the way you do." This did not sound as if he admired me for it, believe me. Irritably, I said, "I think *you* do it much better. The world handles me, not vice versa. I'm always playing catch-up with money and women."

"Thanks for the poem," he said.

Before I could reply with something properly bitter, the snowy shape of Penelope Anne Golden made its way through a blast of white wet. She wore a hooded parka; the hood made her look like one of those figures in a medieval print: All she needed was a scythe.

I figured we were finished so I backed away as she approached. I watched them from the safety of my warming car. She was gesticulating wildly, Brandauer stood there like a prisoner being accused of various crimes. Every few moments he shrugged. I don't think he said anything. Clearly, he still had not treated her "life" the way she wished.

I started the car and Penelope was standing outside knocking on the window. She spat a mouthful of snow at me. When I rolled the window down she stuck her sweet snowy face in and kissed me. It was an angry kiss, more like a bite.

"Do y'all want to make love to me?" she asked.

It was such a crazed moment that I thought the "y'all" meant both of us—me and poor soaked Brandauer hunching himself into his Volkswagen. But it was nothing so fancy. He must have said something about her stories that got her southern rage going and I was handy. Her mouth had a soft, wet give that was tempting. But over her shoulder I saw Brandauer struggling to start his frozen car and all I could do was shake my head from side to side.

"Fuck you," she said and stumbled away in the snow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The next day, in class, Brandauer read the last line of my poem: *Shape is fate revealed.*

"What the hell was that?" I said, afterwards.

"It seemed appropriate."

"You're too damned appropriate, Brandauer," I said. "That line makes no sense without the rest of the poem."

"Too bad," he said. "You gave it to me. It's mine now. And I gave it to the class. Remember it's *A* not *The.* By the way, you look terrific with your new shape. Maybe now you can make do with less all around."

I said nothing about yesterday's craziness in the snow with Penelope. He said even less.

A few months later *Time* magazine got wind of Brandauer's cross-country number. It was oddball enough to get their attention. This shy master suddenly zipping around the country teaching writing students using only a fourteen-page story about a strange custom of fasting as an art form. And, of course, Kafka was the perfect writer to refer to without having to read him. Everybody knows what you mean when you talk about Kafka, don't they?

When they called me, the researcher said they'd gotten my name from a Ms. Penelope Anne Golden. I thought, She doesn't know the rules of the game, and I eased them off the phone. Naturally they confused Brandauer with the Hunger Artist in the story. And naturally they called it *The* Hunger Artist, losing Brandauer's precious *A.*

Reading the piece made me think about our singular friendship. What a match! Brandauer owned a natural dignity and carried himself with such care that it bordered on the mysterious. He had the patience of someone enrolled in a religious order for life whose faith had never been shaken. Myself, I had a gift for clowning and an attention span of about a minute and a half. He was at home with order; I was companion to confusion. His arena of pleasures was narrow, carefully at-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tended to. Mine was indiscriminate, loose (with significant exceptions such as ignoring Penelope Anne's sexual invitation). And, strangest of all, he insisted on taking me seriously; something I could never quite manage. We were a comic pairing, a Mutt and Jeff of the writing life.

The comedy ended abruptly in Miami. There was a woman at his bedside, tall, European looking, her dress a little too long, all in gray. She fluttered off the instant I arrived.

". . . who told you . . . ?"

"Don't talk."

"Isn't it crazy dying *here?* Did you see those foolish-looking palm trees on the way from the airport? This is not a serious place."

He was bringing his own seriousness with him, hooked up to all the usual hi-tech medical paraphernalia, a Frankenstein monster of unexpected disaster.

"The food is terrible here."

"Hospitals," I said stupidly.

"It's Tuna Fish every day for lunch. Awful."

He didn't seem to know he was making his own deathbed comedy. Maybe they gave him Tuna Fish because someone told them it was his lifelong lunch.

Brandauer gestured for me to bend closer. His chest wind was not blowing with its usual strength.

"Chaim . . ."

"No, I'm . . ."

"I know, I know." He was irritated at his lapse—confusing me with his Orthodox Jewish disciple. He wanted order, as usual, not confusion.

"I envy the p-p-p-p-p- . . ." It was the longest, most painful stammer I'd ever heard from him. I waited while he struggled. Finally the word arrived: ". . . panther!" We were back to topic A. Or topic K. Relieved and exhausted by the effort he added, "I envy him—just a little," and sneaked in a quick little smile. "That girl, Penelope . . . you slept with her?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No," I said too quickly.

"Ah," he said. "Too bad."

I was starved. In the gray hospital cafeteria I drank some chemical coffee and ate a cardboard croissant. The pale bird of a woman who had been at Brandauer's bedside sat down next to me.

"No intrusion meant," she said. "But you're a friend of my husband's, are you not?"

She spoke with a foreign accent and sounded like a translation and that was how I learned the whole secret subtext of Brandauer's story, a wife and a son kept hidden in Italy all those years. Her name was Francesca and her son was Mauro. She was content, she quickly made it clear, to be Brandauer's background story. Her son had been left with friends in Genoa. But she'd sought me out because she wanted the world to know that her husband was honest and responsible and had always taken care of them even during his long absences.

"What can I do?" I asked.

What came through at last was that, to her, I was Brandauer's friend the journalist. He must have shown her the Interview in *The Paris Review,* so many years ago.

"Tell me," I said, "did he have this heart problem for a long time?"

"He found out about nine years ago," she said. "His whole family had the heart—but his started then."

"I see." I don't know what I saw, but nine years ago was when he'd left his little room to start teaching.

"And you will tell how he was good and a good father, too. Not just a writer. You will write about this for the world."

I was too exhausted to set her straight, too miserable at how awfully ill, white of face and starved Brandauer looked. Yes, I would tell the whole world, I said, I would tell how fine and honest he was. What the hell! The comedy of misunderstanding had begun with a genera-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of students excitedly greeting Brandauer and, instead, getting Kafka. Let it end—if it was ending—with a redundant, foolish promise. I had no means of addressing any large public to tell them about this man who was, indeed, so fine and honest that he sometimes seemed a visitor from a different place. She kissed me on the cheek and left an odor of dried flowers, vaguely foreign.

"What I couldn't tell Penny was . . ." He started on this as soon as I was at his bedside again, as if we'd been talking all along. ". . . she couldn't see it . . . that putting it together was the main thing . . . all the big chunks of life she had . . . all the struggles, the pleasures . . . you need a line, I told her . . . a line of words . . . just like a poet you need a line . . . then the people and the lives and what they do to each other . . . then they can go into the line and find their beat . . . But . . ."

"Listen," I said. "How do you feel? Do you want the nurse?"

I waited. He seemed to have forgotten I was there. Then, very softly:

"*. . . Enough . . . and not one bit more. That's what counts.*" He laughed. It was like a cough with an edge of amusement. "*And then, even a little less.*"

"Isn't that what you've been telling *me* all this time?" I felt like an idiot dealing myself in. It seemed to me that he nodded.

"But don't forget," I said. "For the panther, enough is a whole lot of bloody meat."

Brandauer smiled. "Did I tell you how I envied the p-p-p-p- . . ."

This time I interrupted and supplied the word. "Yes, the panther," I said. It sounded impatient and mean spirited. I felt badly that I had not let him finish his own stammer and I began a burst of words. "I've always loved the double ending: when the Hunger Artist dies after whispering that the public should not admire him: . . . *I*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have to fast, I can't help it. . . . I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I would have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else . . ." I was weirdly proud at being able to quote so much from memory. Foolishly, as if that meant I understood it, understood Brandauer, our confused friendship, my eternally unfinished life.

"Then they clear out the cage," I went on, "And put in the young panther. *The food he liked was brought to him without hesitation by the attendants . . . his noble body, furnished almost to the bursting point with all that it needed seemed to carry freedom around with it, too . . .*" I was quoting more and more, in desperation, watching Brandauer fade away from me on the rumpled pillow. After all the years of his classes it was like a final examination I'd suddenly set for myself. I spoke the ending.

"Somewhere in his jaws it seemed to lurk; and the joy of life streamed with such ardent passion from his throat that for the onlookers it was not easy to stand the shock of it. But they braced themselves, crowded round the cage and did not want ever to move away."

"Bravo, my friend," Brandauer said, although I'd done nothing more than quote the published ending. Perhaps I'd passed.

"I wonder," he said, "If panthers have heart attacks . . . all that red meat . . ." At the corner of my eye I saw his wife start to move towards us.

"Listen," he said, already fainter.

"Yes . . ."

"That thing you wrote—the gift—a poem about dieting . . ."

"Yes."

"Well," Brandauer paused and a shadow of an old smile showed up on his lips. "It doesn't matter so much what you eat," he said. "*What matters is what eats you. That's what . . .*" Apparently he could not manage the last *counts;* the last summation left hanging in the empty hospital air. He grew silent and the silence became sleep and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the sleep became death but not until the next morning while I was turning my rented Ford onto its side at the entrance to the freeway.

"What did he mean, that stuff about the Panther?" Penny asked.

"Who, Kafka?" I was in a teasing mood. My ribs had stopped aching, though they were still strapped. The cuts on my forehead had healed. I'd survived.

"Brandauer, I mean," she said. "You know damned well."

"I think the talk about the Panther was for himself," I told her. "There was something else for you and a few things for me."

She laughed. Not an angry note in her scale these days. "He's preaching at me from beyond the you-know-what."

"Talking, maybe—preaching, no!"

I was determined to be serious for as long as possible, determined to hold out for as long as possible against the white dress, the soft skin, the shining pearls sliding across the summer suntan, the sweet citrus scent of perfume. I told her what Brandauer had said about the trick of just enough and no more—about the line of words, though I couldn't get it exactly as he'd said it.

We were in Middletown, Connecticut in July, a hot and sticky time in the Connecticut River Valley. The Wesleyan Writer's Conference, like so many, was scheduled for a hellish time of the year. I'd called her to deliver Brandauer's message and to ask her if she was still coming to the Conference even though our original reason for enrolling was now cremated, the ashes buried in a cemetery in Italy.

And here we were, wearing our name tags but skipping the standard get-acquainted cocktail party in favor of our own dinner. We sat at the bar waiting for a table and I told her about the accident, about the turbaned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doctor Singh at the Emergency Room, about how he had ignored my Brandauer grief and blamed the crash on vertigo and weakness due to my crazy up-and-down dieting.

Tonight, I said, was definitely to be up. The place I'd picked was famous for its lamb, its fresh vegetables and its strawberry soufflé dessert which had to be ordered hours before dinner. I'd done that and with it a rich '79 Chateau LaLagune.

"No Hunger Artist you," Penny said. "Do you think he knew you'd hunt me up and deliver his last words?"

"I don't know. He didn't have too much breath left and he knew it. He was just getting all sorts of stuff out. Last Chance Saloon stuff."

"I kept thinking he'd drop that damned story. Pay attention to something else. It doesn't matter anymore." She laughed. "God, we fought it out in rain and heat and snow."

"What *were* you two fighting about?"

"I thought I knew—I wanted him to pay attention to me and my life—my love affairs in purple prose . . . yes, I know that's what they were, now . . . I wanted him to love my stories as if they were parts of my body, of my self. Then, when that didn't happen and he stuck to his guns about making me imagine everything as if it was new, then I wanted him to love me and my body as if we were my writing. But he wouldn't do that, either. All he would do was tell me to cool out my prose, cool out my life . . . cool . . . God!"

"Was that about when you asked me if I wanted to make love to you in a blizzard in North Dakota or somewhere? I figured that for a ricochet."

"Did I do that?" It was the first time I'd ever seen the southern steamroller embarrassed. I did not remind her about the "Fuck you" that had followed. "I was so pissed off I told *Time* magazine all sorts of bullshit about him."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I noticed."

"There's too much air-conditioning in here," she said. But the maître d' quickly rescued her from embarrassment and chill.

Dinner was phenomenal—the lamb pink and juicy and the soufflé hot and runny. Her big theory came out over the coffee.

"If you hadn't called me I would have dug *you* up."

"Oh?"

"I had to tell you what I'd figured out about Brandauer. When I found out about the heart attack it threw me. When I stopped crying I read the full obit and a light bulb went off." She leaned over the debris of dinner, intent in the old way, almost angry again. "*He knew he was going to die,*" she said. "The paper said he'd had a history of heart trouble for almost a decade. It explains everything."

She was in no mood for my interruption or disclaimer. "His picking that particular story and living the way he did, the way he gave only the minimum necessary to life, and *everything* to writing."

"Because he knew his clock was ticking so fast, you mean?"

"Don't forget," she said solemnly, "The only piece that you could call furniture in the Hunger Artist's cage was a clock."

"My God," I said. "You're picking up where he left off."

"That's why Brandauer kept teaching that story. It was his anthem." She wiped some pink from her lips, soufflé or lipstick I couldn't tell.

"That's not all," she said.

"Hold it," I said. "He could just as easily have gone the other way. You know—live all you can—that Henry James stuff . . . seize the *carpe* . . . *carpe* the *diem* . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ha, ha," she said. "Listen, I've got something I want to read to you." I'd never read or heard anything she'd written. She pulled out some crumpled papers and over the coffee cups and bread crumbs she read this:

Krakauer: a story

Word was out that Krakauer was leaving his cage. After fourteen years of writing private astonishments, he was going into the public world to teach. This was an event worthy of comment in media as disparate as *The New York Times Magazine* (with its oddly inappropriate ads of young women in their sensual underwear) and *Critical Inquiry,* with its puritanically ordered columns of dense text.

Would he teach hermaneutics and literature—the Real Stuff—or just Creative Writing, the Fake Stuff? Would he be skinny, emaciated from years of isolation in Genoa, making and remaking sentences, *The New York Times* wondered? Would he be distracted from the larger concerns of The Academy by the sophomoric demands of students, *Critical Inquiry* wondered?

On a spring day in Seattle, the mystery was dispelled. That first morning Krakauer met with a crowded class of students still wet behind the ears with Seattle rain.

"I will not read any student's stories," he announced, this wraith from the lost land of language. "Instead, I will read 'A Hunger Artist by Franz Kafka.' "

Muted exclamations of pain and thwarted personal ambition. One pale young woman felt her chance at a new life slipping away.

Krakauer was firm. He began to read . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was too damned good; the sentences supple and simple. Better than what I've written here. Tougher, more condensed, cooler; less tangled with the ego of a narrative voice.

"Hey," I said. "I haven't read your other stuff. But you seem to have cooled out. It's very strong, so far."

"I know," she said folding the papers back into her bag. "It's just the beginning."

I decided that such an expansive dinner deserved a cigar and we moved to the terrace.

"Do you mind if I smoke this?"

"Go on. My Daddy smoked cigars."

I touched Penny's cheek and rubbed my hand gently downwards, to see if anything had changed between us. She closed those enormous eyes for a flick of the lids. Her tongue licked a raspberry seed from her upper lip. A tick of time but it told me enough.

"Well," I said. "I guess it's just us, now."

A long sigh, then a grin. "I miss him," she said. "Even more than when he was here."

Melancholy laughter from both of us.

I put my arm around her shoulder and she collapsed against me. I had a story to finish on my desk, that night. It could wait.

In the morning I woke with my head on Penny's gently moving stomach. I felt satisfied and hungry and strange. The night before we'd been a kind of solution for each other. Now it was morning and we could start the natural process of becoming problems for each other. What would we do now with our bodies, our minds, our stories? How would we deal with each other—our anxieties, our appetites? *It doesn't matter what you eat . . . It matters what eats you . . . That's what . . .*

Penny stirred. She got up and went to the bathroom. When she came out I watched her while she performed a morning stretch, warm and lean. Conventional southern young woman that she was, she'd worn a white night-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gown to bed, like a bride. The sun shone behind her through the bathroom window and I saw her shape revealed through the fabric of her nightgown, her parted legs an elegant *V* with curly pubic hair, perfectly clear, infinitely mysterious. My desire for her was urgent and stupid, without thought. I had no wish to read her stories, to encounter previous lovers. I wanted to be Opus One. I made love to her as if I wanted to get her inside myself, not the other way around. The exertion stung my strapped ribs and reminded me of my brush with highway death following my final brush with Brandauer. But holding Penny afterwards made me feel safe for the moment. I noticed, for the first time, that her right eye sort of wandered. Fresh details; she would be my newest unfinished story.

Immediately after, she was back at her idée fixe. She sat up straight. "Now, in the morning light," she said, "do you see how it explains everything? He *knew* he was going to die."

I kissed her lips; a faint flavor of raspberry from the night before. "You mean unlike the rest of us."

"Come on. You know what I mean."

"No," I said, implacable, remembering the jaws of the Panther.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Henry Green, the pen name of Henry Vincent Yorke (1905–1974), is the author of nine acclaimed novels, including *Living, Loving,* and *Party Going.*

Naguib Mahfouz won the 1988 Nobel Prize for literature. He is the subject of an interview in this issue. **Denys Johnson-Davies,** an eminent Arabic-English translator, recently translated Mahfouz's *The Time and the Place,* a collection of stories.

Joanna Scott's most recent novel, *Arrogance,* was nominated for the 1991 PEN/Faulkner Award. She teaches at the University of Rochester.

Daniel Stern is the author of nine novels and two collections of short stories. His *Twice Told Tales* (Paris Review Editions, 1989) won the Fiction Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A second collection, *Twice upon a Time,* is forthcoming from W.W. Norton.

POETRY

John Ashbery is the author of thirteen books of poetry including, most recently, *Flow Chart,* and a volume of art criticism, *Reported Sightings.* His *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975) won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, the National Book Award and the National Book Critics' Circle Award. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and a MacArthur Fellow, and is chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. He is currently the Charles P. Stevenson, Jr. Professor of Literature at Bard College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Uli Becker lives in Berlin. **Charles Paul,** his translator, also lives in Berlin, where he teaches English.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) may have begun work on *The Divine Comedy* as early as 1300, and it was largely complete by 1315. He finished the last section shortly before his death. **Robert Pinsky** is completing a translation of Dante's *Inferno.* His most recent book of poetry is *The Want Bone* (Ecco).

Joy Dworkin teaches world literature and writing at Missouri Southern State College.

Michael Fried is Director of the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University. His cycle of poems, *Simple Daylight,* has been set to music by John Harbison and performed by the soprano Dawn Upshaw. His most recent book is entitled *Courbet's Realism* and was published in 1990.

Ian Ganassi's poetry has appeared in *Pequod* and *Boulevard.* He is a staff member at this magazine.

Donald Hall was the first poetry editor of *The Paris Review.* His most recent publications are the book-length poem *The One Day* (1988) and *Old and New Poems* (1990). "The Museum of Clear Ideas" won the 1991 Bernard F. Conners Prize for Poetry.

Mark Halliday's second collection of poems, *Tasker Street,* won the Juniper Prize and will be published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1992. His critical work *Stevens and the Interpersonal* was published by Princeton University Press in 1991.

Brooks Haxton teaches in the graduate writing program at Warren Wilson and Sarah Lawrence colleges. His books include *Traveling Company,* a collection of poems, and *Dead Reckoning,* a book-length narrative poem.

Maja Herman was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. She has published two books of poetry and a book of essays. She now lives in New York. **Mark Strand,** formerly the United States Poet Laureate, assisted the author in her translation of this poem from the Serbo-Croatian.

James Laughlin founded New Directions Publishing Corporation in 1936. His most recent book is a collection of short stories entitled *Random Stories* (1990). His *Collected Poems* will be published this summer by Moyer Bell.

Greg Miller's poems have appeared in *The Threepenny Review, Verse* and *Agni.* He is a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley.

Ottó Orbán was born in Budapest in 1936. He has published a dozen collections of poetry and translates poetry from several languages. **Bruce Berlind**'s translations of contemporary Hungarian poetry earned him the Hungarian PEN Memorial Medal in 1986. He is currently translating a selection of poems by Ottó Orbán entitled *The Journey of Barbarus.* He is Dana Professor of English (Emeritus) at Colgate University. He was assisted in this translation by **Maria Kőrösy,** the English Secretary at the Hungarian PEN Club in Budapest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Linda Pastan is Poet Laureate of Maryland. Her eighth book, *Heroes in Disguise,* was recently published by W.W. Norton.

Oskar Pastior was born in 1927 in Hermannstadt, Transylvania, and has lived in West Berlin since 1969. His most recent collection is called *Vokalisen & Gimpelstifte* (Hanser, 1992). His translator, **Harry Mathews,** is the Paris Editor of *The Paris Review.*

Donald Revell's third collection of poetry, *New Dark Ages,* won the PEN West Award for 1990. His new collection, *Erasures,* will be published by Wesleyan University Press this fall.

Nicholas Samaras's first book of poetry, *Hands of the Saddlemaker,* won the 1991 Yale Younger Poets Series Award. He teaches English at the University of Denver and is completing his second collection of poems.

May Sarton's most recent book of poetry is *The Silence Now.* W.W. Norton recently published a journal of her seventy-ninth year, *Endgame.*

Tom Sexton's work has appeared in *Hayden's Ferry Review* and *ZYZZYVA.* He is the poetry editor of the *Alaska Quarterly Review* and teaches at the University of Alaska.

Enid Shomer's poems have appeared in *Poetry, Tikkun, Ploughshares* and *The New Criterion.* She was a 1989 NEA fellow in poetry and is the author of *This Close to the Earth,* forthcoming from the University of Arkansas Press. Her first book of short stories, *Imaginary Men,* won the 1992 University of Iowa's Short Fiction Award.

Charlie Smith's books include *Indistinguishable From the Darkness,* a poetry collection, and five works of fiction: *Canaan, Crystal River, Shine Hawk, The Lives of the Dead* and *Zebra,* which is forthcoming from Henry Holt. His third poetry collection, *The Palms,* is forthcoming from W.W. Norton.

Arthur Sze is the recipient of a 1991–1992 George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation Fellowship. His most recent book of poems, *River River,* was published in 1987. He lives in Santa Fe.

John Tranter is poetry editor of the Sydney-based business-arts weekly *The Bulletin* and co-editor of the *Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry.*

FEATURE

Robert Phillips is a poet, fiction writer, critic and special consultant to *The Paris Review.* He directs the creative writing program at the University of Houston. His most recent book is a collection of short stories entitled *Public Landing Revisited.* He is the editor of *Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin: Selected Letters,* forthcoming from W.W. Norton. **Daniel Kunitz,** an assistant editor at *The Paris Review,* selected and annotated the letters for this issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEW

Charlotte El Shabrawy (Naguib Mahfouz interview) teaches English and World Literature at the Cairo American College. She is a long-time resident of Egypt and has translated the work of Egyptian playwrights into English.

ART

Roy Lichtenstein was born in 1923 and lives in New York City and Southampton. His work has been exhibited internationally, including major shows at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Saint Louis Art Museum; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. **Jack Pierson** was born in 1960 and lives in New York. His drawings have been exhibited recently at the Pat Hearn Gallery, New York; The Drawing Center, New York; and the Tom Cugliani Gallery, New York. **David Wojnarowicz** was born in Redbank, New Jersey in 1954 and lives in New York. Exhibitions of his photographs, collages, and paintings have been held recently at University Art Galleries, Illinois State University; Exit Art, New York; and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York.

Erratum

In Issue 122, Spring 1992, in the *Notes on Contributors,* **Lawrence Joseph,** who conducted the interview with Yehuda Amichai, was misidentified. He is the author of two books of poetry, *Shouting at No One* and *Curriculum Vitae.* His third book of poems, *Before Our Eyes,* is forthcoming next year from Farrar, Straus & Giroux. He is Professor of Law at St. John's University School of Law in New York City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PARIS REVIEW

UPCOMING ISSUES INCLUDE

FICTION BY
CHARLES D'AMBROSIO • RICK BASS • JIM CARROLL
DENIS JOHNSON • DAN LEONE • BARRY LOPEZ
LORRIE MOORE • JOSIP NOVAKOVICH • JIM SHEPARD
WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN • LAURA YEAGER

FEATURES
AN ITALO CALVINO MEMOIR

INTERVIEWS WITH
MARTIN AMIS • LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS • ANN BEATTIE
JOHN GUARE • MARK HELPRIN • JAN MORRIS
TONI MORRISON • GRACE PALEY • SAM SHEPARD
NEIL SIMON • ALICE WALKER

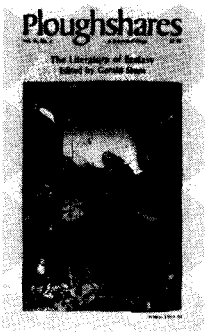
POETRY BY
AMY CLAMPITT • TOI DERRICOTTE • STEPHEN DUNN
MARILYN HACKER • ZBIGNIEW HERBERT • JAMES LASDUN
J.D. MCCLATCHY • MARY OLIVER • CHASE TWICHELL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ploughshares

Read It and Reap

Since 1971, *Ploughshares* has been committed to providing literary perspectives which are ever various and spirited. To this end, the paperback magazine has asked a different writer or poet to edit each issue. Some of these guest editors have included Raymond Carver, Rosellen Brown, Tim O'Brien, Derek Walcott, Marilyn Hacker, Seamus Heaney, Jayne Anne Phillips, and Gerald Stern.



Personal visions, diversified aesthetics, with the common agenda of discovering and cultivating the best in contemporary fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Published three times a year.

Individuals: $19/1 year, $36/2 years, $52/3 years.
$16 a year if you order a gift subscription as well.
Add $5/year for international. Institutions: $22/year.

Start with: ❑ Fall ❑ Winter ❑ Spring
❑ New ❑ Renewal ❑ New Address

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Please send with check to:
Ploughshares • Emerson College
100 Beacon Street • Boston, MA 02116

PR192

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The ANTIOCH REVIEW
50th Anniversary Issue

Over 450 pages

Volume 50, numbers 1 & 2 • Winter/Spring 1992 • $12.95, plus $2.00 postage

Daniel Bell
Jorge Luis Borges
T. Coraghessan Boyle
Raymond Carver
Robert Creeley
William Dickey
Annie Dillard
Ralph Ellison
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Clifford Geertz
Allen Ginsberg
Andrew Greeley
Denise Levertov
Philip Levine
Gordon Lish
Cynthia Ozick
Sylvia Plath
David Riesman
Anne Sexton
Elaine Showalter
Mark Strand
William Trevor
Richard Wilbur
Joy Williams

The Antioch Review, P.O. Box 148, Yellow Springs, OH 45387

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A G N I

The Usual Suspects

Derek Walcott, John Updike, Sharon Olds, Margaret Atwood, Leslie Epstein, Rita Dove, Joyce Carol Oates, Seamus Heaney, Ai, Thom Gunn, Marjorie Agosín, Robert Pinsky, Arturo Vivante, Donald Hall, Russell Banks

Unusual Suspects

Kate Millett, Noam Chomsky, Carolivia Herron, Andra Neiburga, Shu Ting, Natalka Bilotserkivets, Peter Dale Scott, George Scialabba, Delmira Agustini, Joshua Cohen, Marilynne Robinson, Sissela Bok

People We Suspected First

Melissa Green, Sven Birkerts, Tom Sleigh, Ha Jin, Mary Morris, Glyn Maxwell, C. S. Godschalk, Lucie Brock-Broido, Patricia Storace, Tama Janowitz, Edward Hirsch, Jane Miller, Suzanne Gardinier, Stuart Dischell

People No One Else Suspects Yet

Thomas Sayers Ellis, Merrie Snell, Sharan Strange, Rafael Campo, Carol Moldaw, Robert Polito, M. T. Sharif, Volodymyr Dibrova, Martin Edmunds, Fred Marchant, Dzvinia Orlowsky, Jeffrey Gustavson

Suspicious Subjects

Social Control and the Arts, Mentors and Tormentors, War, Spirituality After Silicon Valley, Reflections of a Non-Political Man, Robert Mapplethorpe, The Literature of Chernobyl, Latin America

Isn't it about time you investigated Agni?

Please send ❑ one year ($12) ❑ two years ($23) ❑ three years ($34) of *Agni*. (International addresses add $4/year). Two issues each year. PR

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please mail, with payment, to *Agni*, Boston University, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, Massachusetts 02215.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FOCUSING ON *poets*

JAMES WRIGHT

A Special Feature of juvenile poems with essays by E. L. Doctorow and Peter Stitt. Winter 1990.

JOHN BERRYMAN

A Special Feature of unpublished poems with essays by Philip Levine, Paul Mariani, and Mark Jarman. Autumn 1991.

ELIZABETH BISHOP

A Special Feature of juvenile writings with essays by Thomas Travisano, Elizabeth Spires, William Matthews, and George Lensing. Winter 1992.

Forthcoming—A continuation of our ***Setting Out*** series of autobiographical essays by poets on their early days. Many other features on poetry and poets.

Poetry Lovers Special: Your two-year subscription (only **$27**) begins with the three special issues mentioned above. Your one-year subscription ($15) could begin with any one of these issues. Send your check today, attention: New Subscriptions. Or call 717-337-6774 and use your VISA or MASTERCARD.

Gettysburg
The Gettysburg Review

Gettysburg College / Gettysburg, PA 17325

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"HOPEFUL SIGNS IN THE LITERARY WORLD"

"...UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF **MARILYN HACKER,** IS CURRENTLY CASTING A WIDE NET OVER THE *CULTURE.... "* THAT'S WHAT *THE* FALL *BOOKS* (NOV. 91) ISSUE OF ***THE NATION*** SAID. WE'D LIKE YOU TO SAMPLE OUR "BOLD AND PROMISCUOUS VIEW OF CULTURE" (***THE NATION*** AGAIN) AND ENJOY NEW FICTION AND POETRY BY **RITA DOVE, EAVAN BOLAND, MICHELLE CLIFF, YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA, REGINALD MCKNIGHT, C.K. WILLIAMS;** FIND OUT WHAT **JAN CLAUSEN** HAS TO SAY ABOUT **JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN,** REDISCOVER **MURIEL RUKEYSER** WITH **SUZANNE GARDINIER,** GO TO THE GULF WAR VICTORY PARADE WITH **ALFRED CORN.** THERE'LL BE FOOD FOR THOUGHT, AND A FEW BONES OF CONTENTION, IN EVERY ISSUE!

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 YR.-$22; 2 YR.-$40; 3 YR.-$60. FOREIGN: ADD $8 PER YR. TO COVER POSTAGE.
SAMPLE COPY: $7. WRITE: KENYON REVIEW, KENYON COLLEGE, GAMBIER, OH 43022-9623.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review Put On

Brand new Paris Review tee shirts. Navy blue with white lettering and symbol or white with black lettering and symbol at only $15.00 apiece. Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large.

THE PARIS REVIEW • 45-39 171 Place • Flushing, N.Y. 11358

White with black. Quantity: _____

Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large ☐ Ex. Large ☐

Blue with white. Quantity: _____

Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large ☐ Ex. Large ☐

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

STATE..... ZIP.....

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

(New York State residents please add tax)

MASTERCARD/VISA CARD # _____ EXP. DATE ____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PARIS REVIEW PRINT AND POSTER SERIES

ED RUSCHA

"Anchor In Sand"
Two color lithograph
21" × 32"
edition 100
signed and numbered
1991

Anuszkiewicz • Christo • Chryssa • Clemente • Crash
d'Arcangelo • Paul Davis • deKooning • Dine
Jimmy Ernst • Janet Fish • Frankenthaler
Freilicher • Haring • Hockney • Indiana
Krushenick • Katz • Kelly • Kushner
Lewitt • Lindner • Lichtenstein • MacConnel
Marca-Relli • Marisol • Motherwell • Nevelson
Oldenburg • Rauschenberg • Rivers • Rosenquist
Ruscha • Salle • Saroyan • Shahn • Stamos
Steinberg • Sultan • Summers • Trova • Vicente
Warhol • Winters • Youngerman

For catalogue use response card bound in issue.
Galleries and dealers contact Joan Krawczyk,
The Paris Review, 541 E. 72nd St., New York, NY 10021.

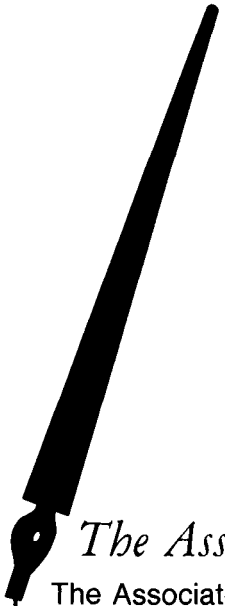
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review Booksellers Advisory Board

THE PARIS REVIEW BOOKSELLERS ADVISORY BOARD is a group of owners and managers of independent bookstores from around the world who have agreed to share with us their knowledge and expertise.

STUART BRENT, *Stuart Brent Books, Chicago, IL*
ANDREAS BROWN, *Gotham Bookmart, New York, NY*
TIMOTHY CARRIER, *Odegard Books, St. Paul, MN*
ROBERT CONTANT, *St. Mark's Bookstore, New York, NY*
JOHN EVANS, *Lemuria, Jackson, MS*
JOSEPH GABLE, *Borders Bookshop, Ann Arbor, MI*
MARGIE GHIZ, *Midnight Special, Santa Monica, CA*
JAMES HARRIS, *Prairie Lights Bookstore, Iowa City, IA*
ODILE HELLIER, *Village Voice, Paris, France*
RICHARD HOWORTH, *Square Books, Oxford, MS*
KRIS KLEINDIENST, *Left Bank Books, St. Louis, MO*
FRANK KRAMER, *Harvard Bookstore, Cambridge, MA*
TERRI MERZ AND ROBIN DIENER, *Chapters, Washington, DC*
PETER PHILBROOK, *Books & Company, New York, NY*
MICHAEL POWELL, *Powell's Bookstore, Portland, OR*
DONALD PRETARI, *Black Oak Books, Berkeley, CA*
ENCARNITA QUINLAN, *Endicott Booksellers, New York, NY*
JACQUES RIEUX, *Stone Lion Bookstore, Fort Collins, CO*
LEWIS ROSENBAUM, *Guild Books, Chicago, IL*
ANDREW ROSS, *Cody's, Berkeley, CA*
HENRY SCHWAB, *Bookhaven, New Haven, CT*
RICK SIMONSON, *Eliot Bay, Seattle, WA*
LOUISA SOLANO, *Grolier Bookshop, Cambridge, MA*
DAVID UNOWSKY, *Hungry Mind Bookstore, St. Paul, MN*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Associates of The Paris Review

The Associates of The Paris Review are those organizations and individuals whose support helps make publication of The Paris Review possible.

ALAN & ARLENE ALDA
BROOKE ASTOR
DR. CHARLES ATTWOOD & JO ANN PICCIONE ATTWOOD
BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, INC.
ETHELYN ATHA CHASE
MARGARET COOK
COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES AND PRESSES
SAGE AND JOHN COWLES
DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.
HAYDEN (SIDD) FINCH
MARIANNE GERSCHEL
THE BERNARD & ALVA GIMBEL FOUNDATION
THOMAS H. GUINZBURG
DRUE HEINZ
DR. WILLIAM KATZ & SUSAN STANTON KATZ
MATTEL ELECTRONICS
NEIL A. McCONNELL
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
PAUL NEWMAN & JOANNE WOODWARD
THE PLAYBOY FOUNDATION
HAMILTON F. RICHARDSON
DELIA ROLLOW
EDWARD ST. GEORGE
SCRIPPS-HOWARD FOUNDATION
FRANCIS ALBERT SINATRA
THE STANTON FOUNDATION
FRANK & DOMNA STANTON
EDWARD S. STEWART
H.S. TRAISON
MRS. JOHN HAY WHITNEY

Inquiries about becoming an Associate should be directed to
The Editors, The Paris Review, 541 East 72nd St., New York, New York 10021

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

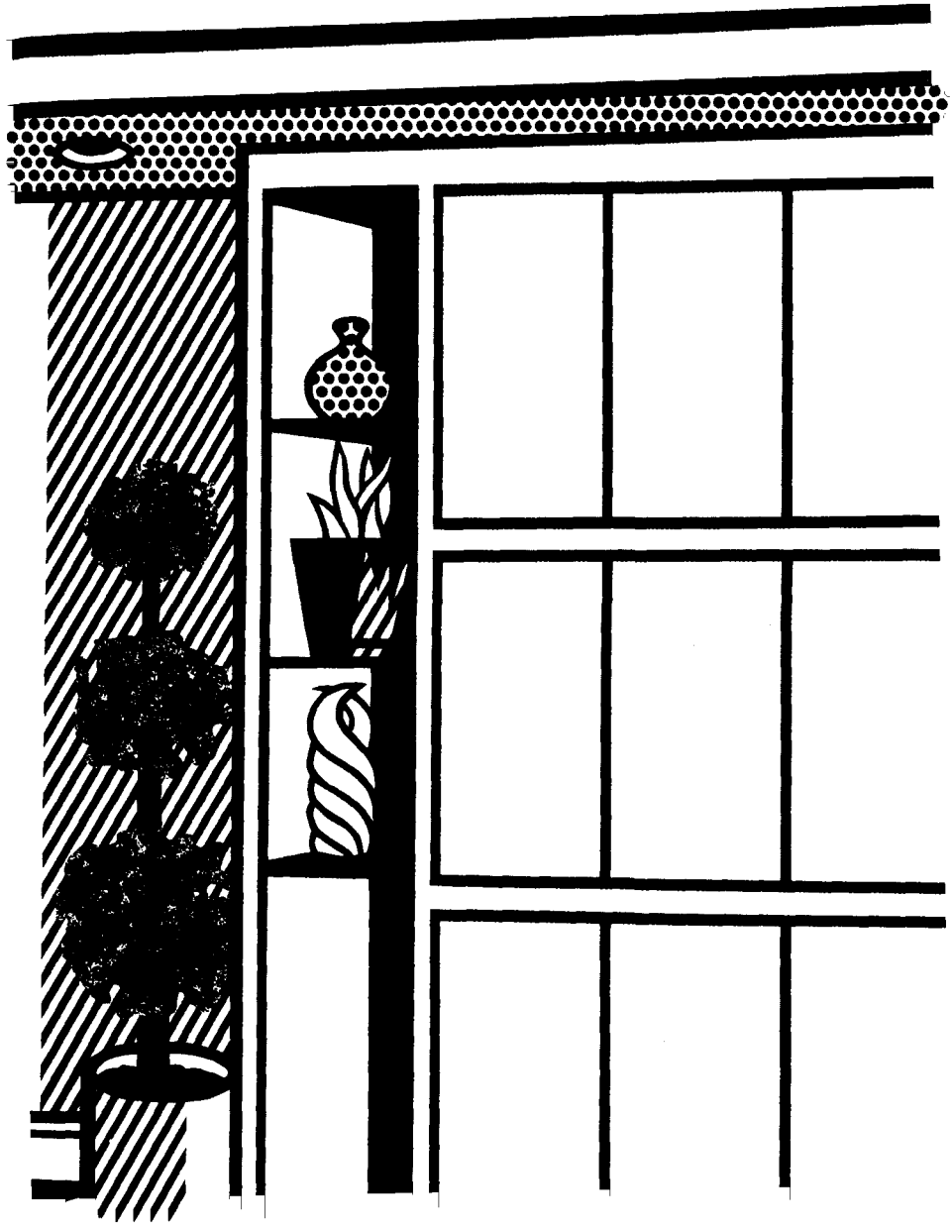
Available now from the Flushing office
BACK ISSUES OF THE PARIS REVIEW

18	Ernest Hemingway Interview; Giacometti Portfolio; Philip Roth.	$25.00
24	Boris Pasternak and Robert Frost interviews; Gina Bernault.	9.50
25	Robert Lowell Interview; Hughes Rudd, X. J. Kennedy.	9.50
26	Marianne Moore and Ilya Ehrenburg Interviews; Malcolm Lowry, Mailer.	9.50
30	S. J. Perelman and Evelyn Waugh Interviews; Niccolo Tucci, 22 poets.	9.50
33	Lillian Hellman Interview; R. V. Cassill, Jeremy Larner, Robert Creeley.	8.00
34	De Beauvoir and Yevtushenko Interviews; Harry Mathews, Gary Snyder.	8.00
35	William Burroughs Interview; Irvin Faust, Leonard Gardner, Ron Padgett.	8.00
36	Saul Bellow Interview; William Styron, Robert Duncan, Barbara Guest.	8.00
37	Allen Ginsberg and Cendrars Interviews; Charles Olson, Gary Snyder.	8.00
38	Arthur Miller Interview; "Lowry in England," James Salter, Leroi Jones.	8.00
39	Edward Albee and Harold Pinter Interviews; e. e. cummings Letters.	8.00
41	Vladimir Nabokov Interview; Kenward Elmslie, Philip Whalen, John Ashbery.	9.50
44	Creeley and I. B. Singer Interviews; James Salter, Diane di Prima.	7.00
45	Updike Interview; Hoagland Journal; Veitch, Brautigan, Padgett, O'Hara.	9.50
46	John Dos Passos Interview; Thomas M. Disch, Ted Berrigan, Kenneth Koch.	7.00
47	Robert Graves Interview; Ed Sanders, Robert Creeley, Tom Clark.	7.00
49	Charles Olson Interview; Frank O'Hara, James Salter.	7.00
62	James Wright Interview; Joe Brainard, Christo Portfolio.	7.00
63	J. P. Donleavy and Steinbeck Interviews; Louis Simpson, Robert Bly.	7.00
64	Kingsley Amis and P. G. Wodehouse Interviews; Diane Vreuls, Thomas M. Disch.	10.00
66	Stanley Elkin Interview; Richard Stern, W. S. Merwin.	7.00
67	Cheever and Wheelock Interviews; Maxine Kumin, Aram Saroyan.	7.00
68	William Goyen Interview; John Updike, William Stafford.	7.00
69	Kurt Vonnegut Interview; William Burroughs, Ed Sanders, John Logan.	7.00
70	William Gass Interview; Peter Handke, William S. Wilson, Galway Kinnell.	7.00
72	Richard Wilbur Interview; Joy Williams, Norman Dubie.	7.00
73	James M. Cain and Anthony Powell Interviews; Dallas Wiebe, Bart Midwood.	7.00
74	Didion, Drabble and Oates Interviews; Vincente Aleixandre Portfolio; Max Apple.	7.00
75	Gardner, Shaw Interviews; Handke Journal, Dubus, Salter, Gunn, Heaney.	7.00
76	Ignatow, Levi, Rhys Interviews; Jean Rhys Memoir Louis Simpson.	7.00
77	Stephen Spender Interview; Mark Strand, Joseph Brodsky, Philip Levine.	7.00
78	Andrei Voznesensky Interview; Voznesensky/Ginsberg Conversation; Edie Sedgwick Memoir; T. Coraghessan Boyle, Tom Disch, Odysseus Elytis.	9.50
79	25th ANNIVERSARY: R. West Interview; Paris Review Sketchbook; Hemingway, Faulkner, Southern, Gass, Carver, Dickey, Schuyler, Gellhorn/Spender/Jackson Letters.	12.00
80	Barthelme, Bishop Interviews; Reinaldo Arenas, J. D. Salinger Feature.	7.00
81	T. Williams, P. Bowles Interviews; Wiebe, Atwood, Federman Fiction; Montale Poetry.	18.00
82	C. Fuentes, G. Garcia Marquez Interviews; Cortazar, Joy Williams, Kincaid Fiction.	7.00
83	J. Brodsky, S. Kunitz Interviews; Gerald Stern/B. F. Conners Prize Poetry.	9.50
84	P. Larkin, J. Merrill Interviews; T. C. Boyle, Edmund White Fiction.	7.00
85	M. Cowley, W. Maxwell Interviews; H. Brodkey, Bill Knott Poetry.	7.00
86	Caldwell, Travers Interviews; Nova, Mailer, McInerney Fiction; Poetry Feature.	10.00
87	H. Boll, Infante Interviews; Milosz, C. K. Williams Poetry.	7.00
88	Gordimer, Carver Interviews; Hill, Nemerov Poetry; McCourt, Davis Fiction.	7.00
89	James Laughlin, May Sarton Interviews; F. Bidart Poetry, Zelda Fitzgerald Feature.	7.00
90	John Ashbery, James Laughlin Interviews; C. Wright Poetry; E. Garber Fiction.	7.00
91	J. Baldwin, E. Wiesel Interviews; Morand, R. Wilson Fiction; Clampitt Poetry.	7.00
92	M. Kundera, E. O'Brien, A. Koestler Interviews; E. L. Doctorow Fiction.	7.00
93	THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY: Roth, Ionesco, Cortazar Interviews; Rush, Boyle Fiction; Brodsky, Carver Poetry.	7.00
94	J. G. Ballard, R. Fitzgerald Interviews; L. Woiwode Fiction, Warhol Photo Feature.	9.50
95	J. Barth, W. Meredith Interviews; Erdrich, Gurganus, Yourgrau Fiction; Hacker Poetry.	9.50
96	Hardwick, Lehmann Interviews; Auster Fiction; Olds, Kinnell Poetry; Spender Features.	9.50
97	Hollander, McGuane Interviews; Dickey, Kosinski Features; Dixon Fiction, Wright Poetry.	7.00
98	L. Edel, R. Stone Interviews; R. Stone Fiction; L. Edel Feature.	8.00
99	A. Robbe-Grillet, K. Shapiro Interviews; E. Tallent Fiction, D. Hall Poetry.	7.00
100	DOUBLE HUNDREDTH: Hersey, Irving Interviews; Gordimer, Munro Fiction; Merrill, Milosz Poetry.	10.00
103	Gray, Percy Interviews; Jas. Jones Feature; Styron Fiction; Brodsky, Dove Poetry.	7.00
104	Brookner, Taylor Interviews; Kittredge Fiction; Levine, Wright Poetry; Beckett Feature.	7.00
105	Calisher, Gaddis Interviews; B. Okri Fiction; A. Zagajewski Poetry.	7.00
106	THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: Lessing, Yourcenar Interviews; C. Smith Fiction; Logue Poetry; Styron Feature.	10.00
108	A. Hecht, E. White Interviews; C. Baxter, J. Kauffman Fiction; S. Olds Poetry.	7.00
109	Mortimer, Stoppard Interviews; Burroughs, Minot Fiction; Mathews, Simic Poetry.	7.00
110	Davies, Trevor Interviews; Boyle, Johnson, O'Brien Fiction; Tomlinson Poetry.	7.00
111	Fowles, Fugard, Spencer Interviews; Tucci, Gurganus Fiction; Proust, Rilke Translations.	7.00
112	Kennedy, Skvorecky Interviews; Malamud, Maspéro Fiction; Perec, Pinsky Poetry.	7.00
113	Frisch, Puig, Wright Interviews; Banville, Gordimer Fiction; Graham, Hirsch Poetry.	7.00
114	Sarraute, Settle Interviews; Matthiessen, P. West Fiction; F. Wright Poetry.	7.00
115	Murdoch, Stegner Interviews; Bass Fiction; Laughlin Poetry; Merwin Feature.	7.00
116	Angelou, Vargas Llosa Interviews; Perec Fiction; Ashbery Poetry; Stein Feature.	7.00
117	Atwood, Pritchett Interviews; R. Price, Stern Fiction; Kizer, Logue Poetry.	7.00
118	Bloom, Wolfe Interviews; Tolstaya Fiction; Ashbery Poetry; Carver, Burgess Features.	9.50
119	Grass, Paz Interviews; M. McCarthy Feature; DeMarinis Fiction; Bonnefoy, Hacker Poetry	9.50
120	Hall, Morris Interviews; Milosz Feature; Brodkey, Mailer Fiction; Corn, Lasdun Poetry	7.00
121	Brodkey, Price Interviews; D. Hall Feature; Minot, West Fiction; Z. Herbert Poetry	7.00
122	Amichai, Simon Interviews; J. Merrill Feature; Konrád, Fiction; Montale, Zarin Poetry	7.00

Please add $2.00 for postage and handling of up to 2 issues; $3.25 for 3 to 5. Price and availability subject to change. Payment should accompany order. For orders outside the U.S. please double the shipping costs. Payments must be in U.S. currency. **Address orders to: 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, N.Y. 11358**

MASTERCARD/VISA # _____ **EXP. DATE** _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED